Race representation and subjectivity: a study of cultural responses to female beauty ideals in Australia

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Race Representation and Subjectivity
A Study of Cultural Responses to Female Beauty Ideals in Australia.

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Doctor of Philosophy
Southern Cross University
Lismore, Australia
2007
I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to another university or institution.

(Signed)…………………………

Date ……………

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document is the culmination of many years of work. It represents a period of enormous skill development on a technical and creative level and one of great intellectual stimulation and learning. Climbing such metaphorical mountains however is never achieved alone and it is the contributions of those who assisted me along the way which I would like to acknowledge.

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- Finally I would like to honour my parents Allaine and Colin Duncan (deceased) for encouraging and supporting my life endeavours.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this PhD thesis to my daughter Rebecca Park, who is a beauty therapist. It is my hope that at some stage in her life she will read the contents of this thesis and derive a broader understanding of the historical, psychological, political and philosophical forces shaping our aesthetics of the female body. It is also my hope that she will utilise her skills in whatever areas she chooses to develop in service to humanity.
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This inter-disciplinary research project draws upon media, cultural and visual art studies concerned with Western beauty ideals affecting non-Caucasian women in Australia. Primary research material obtained through a series of participant interviews and secondary research data have been used in various ways for the production of a series of artworks. The artworks are informed by a response to the data, and critique issues related to the ‘institutionalisation of whiteness’. Observations about experiences of Australian culture by the interviewees combined with an examination of the work by other artists in the field of race and identity, have informed a body of artwork.

The exegesis examines the role of idealised images of female beauty in stating, reflecting and reinforcing social attitudes and institutional priorities. The current ideal of female beauty is determined by a dominant Western culture that defines certain Caucasian physical features of skin colour, body structure and facial characteristics as being ‘more beautiful’ than those of any other. Personal semi-structured interviews with a convenience sample of non-Caucasian women living in Australia identified bias towards a Caucasian / European ideal in relation to body image. A multiplicity of cultural productions associated with the body, its promotion and apparel reinforce this ideal.

Interviewees perceived a negative bias against non-whites through media imagery and visual representations, facilitated through the use of digital manipulation, stereotyping, physical exclusion and under representation of non white women. They also noted a dominance of idealised white women in media imagery. In addition to biased media representations, interviewees identified bias in the design, manufacturing and promotion of particular consumer products. These included clothes, sunglasses and makeup designed for a European body shape and physical structure. These products reinforced their sense of having alien status within the Australian community and the undesirable nature of their own particular physical features.
Western media and culture restate beauty ideals by situating stereotypes within visual images of idealised beauty, and facilitate a subconscious exchange of information. Women can measure their own worth based on a comparison to this ideal or stereotype. Significant historical factors have influenced the idealisation of whiteness. By examining visual art archives the practice of idealising whiteness is traced throughout the history of Western civilization, dating from the ancient Greeks (500BC). Motivating factors include an association with the elite, privileged and powerful as well as moral associations with chastity and purity. These values were exported globally following European expansion and subsequent colonisation of many countries from around the 16th to 20th centuries.

Responding to these issues my work explores issues associated with identity and power and to this extent the artwork highlights the individual encounter of non-Caucasian women within post-colonial Australia. Their experiences interrogate contemporary global culture in the context of national and individual identity in Australia today. My art works offer a set of interpretations and analyses of these concerns.

Constructed from wax, resin, clay, glass, installation and video extracts the work explores these narratives through figurative representation. The personal journey travelled throughout this PhD candidature is reflected through the exhibition material and highlights the renegotiation experienced as one traverses into unfamiliar cultural territory.

The interview contributions to the research enable projection of private perceptions into the public domain. The artworks made in response to and analysing issues raised through the theoretical research bring together the outer world of the social with the inner world of the psyche. The tension created between the spheres creates a spatial metaphor that is both interpreted and
challenged through my visual art practice. The notion of an inner and outer space parallels fabrication methods used in the creation of my work where a hollow internal space is shelled by a ceramic skin separating it from the external space it occupies. The conceptual bridges connecting the internal experiences of the individuals involved in addition to my subjective response, and the external expression of this experience through the practical artworks produces a framework for intertextual analyses. This dynamic facilitates a transfer of meaning deployed through an understanding of how the work is made, where it comes from and what its meaning may infer for me and the viewer.

The inter-disciplinary format of this research has enabled a multifaceted exploration of theory and visual art practice, resulting in a diversity of outcomes aimed at contributing to social understanding in Australia’s future.
CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

Few scholars in the humanities and social sciences would disagree with the contention that art helps shape ideas, define social attitudes, and fix stereotypes. Prejudices, fears, hopes and every type of moral assumption are channelled through images that serve as instruments of persuasion and control… But one set of images, whether involving the majestical talents of a recognised old master or the commercial aims of a hack illustrator, settles the question by demonstrating that all visually rendered ideas inevitably ally themselves with linguistic principles and may be studied as ‘text’, embody opinion, and ultimately, reinforce institutional priorities.¹

In this thesis I will examine the formative role imagery plays in determining the perceptions of ‘ideal’ female beauty and its impact on the body ideals of non-Caucasian women living in Australia. I will argue the current ideal of beauty is determined by a dominant western culture that defines the Caucasian physical features of white skin, a generalised body size and shape, facial structure and characteristics as being ‘more beautiful’ than those of any other. This has been demonstrated through the history of western image-making which has traditionally idealised images of white women and negatively stereotyped non-whites.² The tradition of rendering images of ideal female beauty has historically been the function of the artist. However media and technological advances in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries have resulted in a dramatic alteration of the image-making landscape. These advances have not only subverted the traditional role of the artist but also replaced the artist as the chief means for constructing visual representations. These developments have facilitated the media in emerging as the dominant image maker in the Australian community today. Its vast reach into the lives of the Australian public is unprecedented as it penetrates the personal confines of the home where many Australians spend their spare time interacting with one form of media or other.³ This degree of penetration has facilitated an unprecedented scale of influence in determining and conveying society’s current female body ideals. By harnessing the visual image, the multitude of media forms including films, billboards, TV,  

magazines and newspapers deliver images of female body beauty ideals that are consumed by Europeans and non-Europeans alike. The Australian media reflects a dominant European presence despite the multicultural society in which it operates. The question remains as to how the over-representation of white images of idealised female beauty impacts on the self image and self esteem of women from non-European backgrounds living in Australia.

The media and the images it employs cannot be viewed in isolation from its commercial context. The media in the Western world operates within a consumer/capitalist society and this relationship, once translated into a practical reality, provides corporate business with considerable influence.\(^4\) By incorporating stereotypes within images designed to sell products, the function of the image serves a capitalist system.\(^5\) It is advertising’s carefully engineered ability to operate subconsciously that enables it to influence people’s desires and aesthetics.\(^6\)

By situating stereotypes within visual images of idealised beauty, the media facilitates a subconscious exchange of information over any superficial dialogue.\(^7\) Women are often unaware of the larger forces at play that contribute to feelings of self-loathing and body dissatisfaction. Comparisons to images of ideal female beauty are one of these factors.\(^8\) Women tend to measure their own worth based on a comparison to an ideal or stereotype.\(^9\) It is the process of ‘internalising’ the stereotypical images of female beauty which is believed by Kevin Thompson, Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Southern Florida and Leslie Heinburg, to play a vital role in how the media adversely affects the body image and self esteem of many women.\(^10\) Not only do these images have the ability to impact on the way white people feel about themselves, they also influence how Caucasians see non-Caucasians and, most importantly to this study, how non-Caucasians see themselves.

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\(^{9}\) Ibid

\(^{10}\) Leslie Heinburg and Kevin Thompson, ‘Social Comparison: Gender, target importance ratings and relation to body image disturbance’, *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality*, 1992, 7, pp. 335-44.
In addition to the effects of idealised images on the individual, these images can also be seen to reflect and reinforce social attitudes and institutional priorities. For example, the over-representation of idealised images of Caucasian women in the Australian media may be seen to reflect the power structures organised in Australian society in regards to gender, ethnicity, race, and political priorities. By deconstructing images of women, it becomes possible to read them as texts articulating broader social attitudes and institutional priorities.

Reference to the term ‘ideal’ beauty is made throughout this thesis. The word ‘ideal’ is defined by the Macquarie dictionary as,

Exist as an archetype, an ultimate object or aim of endeavour … that which exists only as an idea, existing only as an idea, not real or practical, visionary … A standard of perfection or excellence. A conception of something in its highest perfection. A person or thing regarded as realizing such a conception or conforming to such a standard, and taken for imitation.11

The word beauty is defined as,

A pleasing quality associated with harmony of form or colour, a person or thing that arouses such delight; especially, a woman widely regarded as beautiful.12

Realising the current western female beauty ‘ideal’ by its definition as an archetype or that which exists as an idea, represents a type of impossibility for both western/Caucasians and non-Caucasian women alike. Very few Caucasians are also able to arrive at its conception of perfection. However, it is important to point out that the western female beauty ideal has a different context for non-Caucasian women who may not have the standard Caucasian physical features of white skin, smooth hair texture or specific physical frame. For the non-Caucasian, the definition of Caucasian ideal beauty is often dependent on the denigration of what is not Caucasian and efforts to approach the ideal are made at even a greater cost to health and wellbeing.13

The opening quote by Albert Boime suggests that by approaching the reading of images as text an increased understanding into their psychological affects, commercial function and political and social agendas may be gained. Images he

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believes are the vehicle for expressing cultural prejudices, fears and every type of moral supposition and are used as a tool to persuade and control. Boime acknowledges the power of images to “shape ideas, define social attitudes and fix stereotypes”.14 By analysing images in this manner a broader understanding into the effects of the over-representation of idealised images of Caucasian women on the self esteem of non-Caucasian women living in Australia may be derived. The following section details the methods utilised to facilitate this understanding.

1.2 Methodology

The specific details of this particular study have been concerned with researching cultural practices and processes. In an effort to gain a contextualised understanding of the impact the over-representation of idealised images of Caucasian female beauty on non-Caucasians women living in Australia I have analysed the broader historical, psychological and sociological aspects associated with this question. Donna Haraway suggests an individual’s distinctive way of thinking is shaped by their situation, and subsequently coined the term “situated knowledge”.15 How an individual looks at the world is often determined according to their circumstances, experience and interests, race and gender. These factors, Haraway argues, colour the way information is interpreted, collated and understood.16 For example an artist, on entering a room, may notice the colours, designs and aesthetics contained within it, whereas a thief who might enter the same room may view the room from a completely different perspective; more likely assessing its contents for a possible heist.

While it is impossible to completely distance oneself from one’s own situated knowledge, it is useful, when observing culture as social practice, to arrive at meaning by “understand(ing) a way of life from the point of view of its participants”.17 Punch suggests that, for a greater appreciation and understanding of the meaning behind a group’s actions, events, behaviours, and

contexts, an insider’s perspective is desirable. This technique lies at the centre of research methodology known as ethnography. Ethnography is dependant on participant observation as a method of data collection since it argues it is difficult to separate a cultural practice from how and why it is used.\textsuperscript{18} By observing contextual and cognitive processes, the group’s members reveal fundamental aspects of culture and ways of life. Participant observation has become a favoured method of data collection in combination with other supporting data collection techniques. These may include direct participant observations, interviews with one or more participants, and documentation or writings that give a more comprehensive view of the data, such as film or audio records and diaries, etc.\textsuperscript{19} In terms of this research project, other relevant material ranging from secondary research findings, press clippings, video recordings and TV documentaries were all accessed to provide multiple sources of evidence for observation and analysis. From these items, inferences were made which aided in the final analysis.

A qualitative research approach was used because of its ability to facilitate a more direct experience of participants’ attitudes and views. The technique of in-depth interviewing allowed me to gain a unique perspective into complex and sensitive issues and provided a useful method of studying human attitudes and behaviour and behaviour changes in context. Through a qualitative research methodology, patterns began to emerge that were used to draw conclusions and construct a theoretical and conceptual framework.

Women from a selection of racial/cultural backgrounds were invited to respond to a list of questions in small focus groups or as individuals. Their responses to questions relating to body part preferences were explored in relation to their own racial physical features and their perceptions of the dominant Caucasian group. In addition, issues relating to stereotyping, media influences, and stories about their experience as a minority group living in the Australian community were discussed. These personal contributions provided the primary data for this study. This data was examined alongside discourses of beauty, body ideals and stereotyping evidenced in secondary research sources.


Access to participants was limited to those known to the researcher or accessible to her through geographical movements and associations. As such they constituted a convenience sample. The majority of participants were living in New South Wales. While it is impossible for an individual from a particular race to speak on behalf of all women from that race or ethnic grouping the sample represents a relevant cross-section of individuals from non-Caucasian backgrounds ranging in age and race, who were living in Australia during the period the research was undertaken. The majority of the women interviewed were from a middle-class socio economic group and tertiary educated. These factors are relevant to the participants’ geographical mobility and access to and consumption of media.

The interviews were carried out in person with a total of nineteen women from three continents taking part. Six women of African or mixed African heritage, seven Australasian participants and six women of Middle Eastern heritage, (predominantly Iranian), comprised the racial mix of the participant composition.

Table 1. Racial Breakdown of Interviewed Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African</th>
<th>Australasia/India</th>
<th>Iranian/ Middle East</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African/European</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
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<td>African/European</td>
<td>Indian</td>
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By structuring the racial/cultural composition of participants in this framework, a broad international overview of experiences of women from a diversity of racial/cultural backgrounds now living in Australia was obtained.20

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20 Before any research project which involved human participants could take place, an application to The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) was required.
The ages of the women interviewed ranged from between 18 to 50 years of age. The interviews were carried out between the years 2000 and 2005. The interviews lasted on average forty minutes. Some extended to an hour and a half and others were only 30 minutes. The interviews were semi-structured to the extent they were guided by a series of 14 questions (See Appendix 1). The questions were designed to provide the information being sought in addition to stimulating responses that would lead to further discussion beyond the most obvious scope of the questions. In short, these in-depth interviews were designed to be adaptable and responsive so important threads of information that arose during the interviews could be pursued. The types of questions asked were open ended so as not to skew the participant’s response towards any particular preconceived position. The questioning approaches utilised in this study were an interpretation or response to recalled events or facts, and an identification, response and interpretation to changes in perceptions. Prior to the discussion/interview process, a list of questions was issued to participants for consideration. Following this period of reflection participants were invited to respond to the questions, sharing their opinions and personal experiences. Their responses were recorded on video and/or audio tape then transcribed. Excerpts from these recordings were transcribed to support thesis analysis, stimulate the creation of art work and contribute to the final exhibition presentation. The interviews at times became conversational with some participants sharing highly personal material. The frankness obtained often surprised the participants involved and resulted in the garnering of highly qualitative material that contributed significantly to the broader aims of the research. The sensitive nature of the personal material shared resulted in a number of participants wishing not to be identified. For this reason in some instances pseudonyms have been used and participant identities obscured.

The racial mix of the focus groups varied. Three groups were comprised of women from similar cultural groupings. For example there was one group comprised of Iranian participants, Asian participants and another of African participants. Another focus group consisted of participants from mixed cultural backgrounds. This group was comprised of mixed African and Middle Eastern participants. It became apparent during the researching process that women participating in mixed racial focus groups or perhaps groups where the other participants were unknown to each other became self conscious during the
interviewing process and were reluctant to share personal information in this environment. Individual interviews or smaller participant numbers in an intimate informal setting provided a more conducive environment for obtaining relevant information. Additionally, if the participants being interviewed had a level of trust or close relationship with the other participants, a more generous, honest and intimate discussion was achieved. This reflected the personal nature of the subject matter under discussion.

The primary and secondary research analysis contained within the theoretical section informed the creative component of this thesis. The artwork investigates issues to do with identity. By working with a variety of mediums such as clay, wax, text and electronics the art practice explores the broader socio/political implications of a dominant culture on the experiences of its marginalised members. To this extent the artwork highlights the individual encounter of non-Caucasian women within postcolonial Australia. Their experiences interrogate contemporary global culture in addition to national and individual identity within Australia today. I see my artwork as giving voice to the experiences of women from marginalised racial and ethnic groups in Australia at a time when, as a nation, Australia seeks to redefine its national identity. In an ongoing attempt to define what it means to be ‘Australian’ the criteria which constitutes what is not Australian or ‘un-Australian’ arises. Since the 1990s a resurgence of community and political interest has been reflected in an increasing number of newspaper articles, editorial comment and letters. At a time of international political and economic uncertainty, global diasporas and population movement, these aspects of identity and power are of critical importance.

My works offer one interpretation and analysis of these concerns. The fragmentation of the female body into isolated body parts that can be disassembled and reassembled suggests the fluidity surrounding perceptions of identity and aesthetics. Through my work I am able to explore the relationship of the individual to history and global culture and its impact on non-European women living in Australia today. By understanding the historical and contextual aspects connected to individual and national identity, I may provide pathways for greater understanding through the creative process.

1.3. Research Informing Project.

Research into the repeated exposure of the western female body ideal on women’s self esteem and body image has primarily focused on the experience of white western women. Its impact on white western women is most evident in the value placed on thinness. Western society generally demonstrates a negative attitude towards women considered overweight with research suggesting these attitudes are evident among children from as early as five years old.\(^{22}\)

Professor Karen Pine from the University of Hertfordshire undertook a study involving 140 male and female, 5 to 11 year old children. Pine questioned the children’s perceptions on the ideal body shape for males and females. Pine also measured if these perceptions of ideal body shape related to masculinity and femininity. Children were shown a variety of figures that ranged from being very thin to very fat. Each child was asked to respond to the image which represented the most desirable shape for a male or female to be. Both sexes agreed on the ideal male shape however Pine found perception on the ideal female shape differed from as early as 5 years old. The female children selected a much thinner female body ideal than the one selected by the boys. The females also expressed a desire to be thinner themselves. Girls as young as 9 years, though not overweight, admitted they were dieting. Pine’s research also noted stereotypical feminine traits were more often associated with a thinner female figure than with a fatter one. This response was in contrast to perceptions of masculinity and male body shape. Results here suggested masculine traits were not necessarily associated with any particular male stereotype. Pine’s findings suggest a female is required to be thin to be feminine, however males may still be considered masculine regardless of varying scales in weight.\(^{23}\)

Professor Kevin Thompson, and Leslie Heinburg’s research explored the role of social pressure and media related imagery in providing impetus to an individual’s need to conform to a particular body shape ideal. Based on the Social Comparison Theory which suggests women derive an increased sense of self worth based on conforming to the prevailing norms of thinness and


\(^{23}\) Ibid.
attractiveness, researchers Thompson and Heinburg examined the impact on young girls’ body image and self esteem following exposure to media images of ideal female beauty. Their research demonstrated that women who were aware of society’s ideal and then internalised these were at an increased risk of developing eating disorders and body image disturbance. Additional research by Dale Cusumano and Kevin Thompson also demonstrated the role of the media in contributing to body image disturbance. By depicting images of the ideal in print or film, Cusumano and Thompson found the media provided the vehicle for comparison and internalisation to occur.

Research by Eric Stice and Erica Shaw concluded the mass media is “one of the strongest transmitters” of the pressure to be thin. Stice and Shaw suggest movies, television, magazines and popular culture provide the images that communicate and illustrate the current ideal of beauty which has resulted in an increased incidence of eating disorders, negative body image and low self-esteem among many Caucasian women. Stice and Shaw suggest the media operates within a broad socio-cultural network and is influenced by social and political consideration such as a capitalist ideology and consumer agenda. They also noted individuals are influenced by peers, family, and school in their perceptions of the ideal female body.

Research into the effects of over-representation of idealised images of female beauty on the body ideals and self esteem of non-Caucasian women living in Australia has been limited. Research in the Social Sciences by Dianne Sweeney (2001) documents the over-representation of ‘white’ women utilised on the front cover of two Australian women’s magazines, Marie Claire and Cleo between September 1995 and October 2000. Sweeney analysed the gender and race of 398 cover-models and found 95.5 per cent of Cleo models and 96 per cent of Marie Claire models could “be judged to be” white[Caucasian]. This was found to be unrepresentative of the multiracial mix within the Australian population which, according to the 1996 Census, found 23.3 per cent of the

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population were overseas born residents. Indigenous peoples were 2.1 per cent of the population although Sweeney’s research found only one Indigenous model was depicted on a cover which represented 0.24 per cent of the total number of cover models. The findings revealed a predisposition towards Caucasians in the selection of models as covers in the women’s magazine market which had increased over time and was unrepresentative of Australia’s cultural and racial diversity. My research builds on Sweeney’s by seeking to understand the effects of this type of near exclusion on the self esteem and body ideals of non-European women living in Australia who may be subjected to this type of ethnic representation.

Research involving representation and the western influence on non-European women’s conceptions of attractiveness has been researched outside Australia. Localised studies from other parts of the world were identified, such as research by Fabienne Darling-Wolf who examined the influence of western media and class in relation to Japanese women’s conceptions of attractiveness in Japan. Darling-Wolf interviewed 29 Japanese women ranging in age from 16 to 81 who were living in Kyoto, a southern Japanese city, in 1988. By employing a qualitative research methodology, Darling-Wolf’s aim was to explore how Japanese women of various ages and socio-economic backgrounds negotiated Westernised representations of female attractiveness promoted in Japanese media. Darling-Wolf established in previous research that the ideals of female attractiveness promoted in the Japanese media are based on western standards. Her participants identified a clear racial hierarchy of attractiveness with white Europeans categorised as the most desirable, those of mixed Asian and European ethnicity in the middle and those of Japanese heritage as least desirable. This racial hierarchy increased Japanese women’s sense of alienation, remoteness and longing when reading women’s magazines that used white European models. Additionally, the fashion advice these magazines conveyed was irrelevant to many Japanese women because of the incompatibility of European designed clothes to fit Japanese body shapes. Many Japanese women felt deceived and resentful when clothes they had seen

28 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
32 Ibid, p.166.
advertised on glamorous European models did not flatter their body shape. This type of experience alienated them from images of European models. Darling-Wolf’s research identifies the individual struggle to negotiate a Japanese identity in the face of white Westernised representations of attractiveness promoted throughout the Japanese media. While her study is limited to a small number of participants and confined geographical location, her work adds to the literature examining how members of marginalised groups might experience the renegotiation of identity resulting from the globalisation of the Caucasian body as the standard of ideal beauty. Darling-Wolf’s research identifies racial bias in the advertising and design of clothes sold in Japan and how this negatively impacts on the experience of Japanese women. This component emerged as a significant feature of my research and is explored further in chapter 3.7 titled Cultural Bias in Product Design. Following the participant interviews a pattern emerged which indicated cultural bias was evident in the design and manufacture of numerous consumer products. Encountering these products was identified as a negative experience that functioned to reinforce the alienation and sense of ‘otherness’ of the non-Caucasian women interviewed. My research builds on that of Darling-Wolf by identifying a number of products that are racially biased in their manufacture and design. Many of these products are being currently marketed within the Australian community and their racial bias remains unquestioned as a result of the European body size and shape being situated as the universal standard.

Additional research by psychiatrist Anne Becker from Harvard Medical School demonstrated how Fijian women’s sense of attractiveness and physical beauty is now being constantly measured against the Caucasian ideal and identified the western media as the conduit. Becker documented the effects of body image disturbance on local women following the introduction of TV to the island of Fiji in 1995.33 Prior to the introduction of TV, the body ideal in Fiji, as in many Pacific islands, was large and robust. Women frequently complemented each other on any weight gain and losing weight was an issue for concern. Becker found this attitude dramatically changed following the introduction of satellite TV where the media content aired contained images of the generalised Western female body shape. Becker was able to monitor the changes following the


introduction of TV and highlight the correlation between a 27 per cent increase in eating disorders with this media exposure. Becker’s study suggested change in cultural perceptions of body shape ideals occurred after Western media exposure as many Fijian women attempted to emulate the images they had seen. Becker’s study also raises questions relating to the duration of exposure to the Western beauty standards. The Fijian study demonstrated the increase in eating problems following only three years of exposure to Western media images. If a minimal exposure of three nights a week can have such a marked impact on women in three years, what are the effects of an extended and concentrated exposure during a lifetime? In addition, Becker’s micro study may be seen to encapsulate some changes that are occurring worldwide. People from various racial and ethnic groups are going to extraordinary lengths in order to change their particular racial and individual features to fit into the Western cultural ideal.

These earlier research studies focused separately on the effects of the dominant Western ideal on particular racial/cultural groups. While useful in creating a framework for a global perspective it does not examine the experiences of non-Caucasian women living in Australia. The uniqueness of my study is its location within Australia, its currency, and the qualitative methodology. Based on the group discussion technique and individual interviews and drawing upon a broad range of women from a diversity of races and ages now living in Australia, these discussions played a particular role in providing insights, depth of knowledge and quality of understanding into the attitudes and experiences of non-Caucasians residing in Australia when excluded from the socially defined criteria of ideal beauty.

1.4. Thesis Structure

The research question seeks to examine the impact of the dominant Caucasian female body ideal on the body ideals of non-Caucasians residing in Australia. Four separate but related components comprise this thesis. Chapter One is comprised of an introduction which states the researcher’s position, identifies important areas of interest in relation to the research question and identifies key terms. The research question and methodology is delineated with the racial

\[34\] Ibid.
breakdown of participants listed. The individual research participants are introduced and the thesis format outlined. Academic research findings contribute to the contextualising of information and provide the conceptualising framework for the primary research project with specific considerations identified. I have constructed a theoretical framework in which I examined the relationship between societal influences on the female body shape, female responses to societal ideals and the resulting consequences that can occur when the ideal that is promoted is unattainable.

Chapter Two is comprised of a discourse analysis of secondary source material dealing with the historical, social, institutional and cultural practices associated with the research question. Only by analysing the broader historical, psychological and sociological aspects associated with this question will it become possible to appreciate the societal factors that influence the body image ideals of these women. I argue that the rejection of physical characteristics which mark non-Caucasian women in the Australian community as ‘different’ can lead to an increased desire to acquire Caucasian features. This process is indicative of a broader phenomenon: the renegotiation of a social identity, and has arisen as a consequence of globalisation, scientific, medical and technological advances, the historical imbalance of power between nations, race and gender and the desire by many non-Caucasians for the same power, wealth and material benefits deemed to be available to those in the West. This secondary literature survey creates a framework from which to situate and measure the primary research presented in section three.

Chapter Three consists of primary research results obtained from a qualitative research study involving non-Caucasian women who were residing in Australia between the years 2000 to 2005. This section draws on women’s experiences and perceptions as a resource for analysing society through participant feedback derived from participant interviews.

Chapter Four is an experiential and expressive reflection and response to the theoretical research outcomes. As an additional primary research endeavour it documents the body of art work produced during my PhD candidature in response to material revealed during the discourse analysis and primary research interactions. The aims and approach utilised in the production of the
artistic outcomes are detailed and document the conceptual framework underpinning this additional sphere of primary research. Introduced into this discussion is a critique of the work created by a group of female artists from a diversity of cultures. Working with a range of mediums these artists demonstrate alternative approaches in dealing with concerns I critiqued through my own artistic endeavours. Their works also highlight alternative ways imagery can be harnessed to make social comment and raise community consciousness. The nominated artists through their performance, installations and photographic works, address the topic of race, the role of the media, and mediated images of beauty. Lucy R Lippard suggests, “Artists often act in the interstices between old and new, in the possibility of spaces that are as yet socially unrealizable”.35

For visual artists it is their expressions through the visually rendered image which can function as the intermediary between the past and the future, forging a path to a new way of seeing. Artists as image makers are therefore conveniently situated to function as a litmus test to measure the composition of social and ethical concerns.

Australia is currently confronted by increasing demands from those calling for the recognition and appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity while at the same time being faced with the homogenisation of Western culture that increasingly undermines that diversity. As Australian society becomes increasingly multicultural,36 ethical dilemmas emerge when unique ethnic characteristics of non-Caucasians are omitted, devalued or replaced in favour of the dominant Caucasian ideal. The stereotyping of the Caucasian as the epitome of female beauty and the non-Caucasian as ‘Other’ has important implications for those women of non-Caucasian backgrounds living in Australia and the Australian society as a whole.

1.5. Research Considerations

To some extent this research may be critiqued as a further contribution to the old paradigm: white researcher studying non-white subject. Eurocentric perspectives have very often limited research into both Caucasians and non-Caucasians because they fail to recognise that their privileged position of whiteness informs the way information is collected, interpreted and presented. Dyer has noted that even when using technologies (as I have to film interviews with non-Caucasian participants), Europeans often fail to consider the cultural and social inscriptions with which their work is imbued. We use various technologies in the way we are shown but are unaware of the cultural and contextual inscriptions that are being continually conveyed when communicated to a broader audience. For this study interviews with women from non-European backgrounds now living in Australia were filmed and then transcribed. How the text is selected and highlighted is determined from my position of privilege.

Ruth Frankenburg argues the oppressed position of minorities enables them to have a much clearer understanding and view of the world than their oppressors and as a European woman who occupies a position of privilege I may not be in the ideal position to speak on or for the experiences of minorities. The ethnographic and qualitative methodology employed in this thesis which employs the interview discussion and taped recording of these women’s first hand experiences and views ensures the non-Caucasian women participating in this study speak for themselves. Another level of such criticism of past white theorists by many non-white academics and feminists is that the experience of non-Caucasian women has often been omitted from contemporary feminist discourses. The inclusion of non-Caucasian women’s experiences in this study counters this criticism and contributes to the limited research into the experiences of non-Caucasians living in Australia.

An additional criticism of feminist research by non-Caucasians, academics and feminists has been the practice of claiming the experience of individual women as universal to a particular cultural/racial group without acknowledging or

39 Ibid.p3
examining the particular differences between women within and between groups. The experience of middle-class Caucasian women was often presented as the experience of all women regardless of other factors such as race and class.\textsuperscript{40} The experiences presented in this research may be unique to the individual participant or they may be broadly shared. During the assessment of the material provided it will become necessary as the researcher to draw some broad conclusions and generalisations about particular cultural groups. At other times it will become necessary to recognise the differences between individuals within these groups and between the various cultural groups represented.

Finally the ages of the women interviewed ranged from 18 to 50 years of age. The wide age range of participants included in the study was specifically targeted in order to reflect the way in which women’s attitudes have changed at different stages of their lives. Excluded from this study were women under 18 years of age. By omitting this age group from the study, an important section of women affected by body image concerns has not been included.\textsuperscript{41} However those included are, with the passing of years, in a position to reflect on their adolescent experience and comment with the benefit of hindsight and maturity. Additionally those women of non-Caucasian backgrounds living in Australia over 50 are not represented in this study. As the participants taking part in this study were taken from a convenience sample of women known to the researcher or within a similar geographical location, women from this age group from non-Caucasian backgrounds were either unwilling or unavailable to take part. Despite this, the study remains productive, with the cross section of women from a broad spectrum of ages and races providing a rich resource from which to glean significant insights into the experience of marginalised groups in Australia.

The length of time participants have lived in Australia also varied. Some participants had resided in Australia for many years while other interviewees had resided for only a period of months. Some participants came from mixed racial heritage making it difficult to classify them into one particular racial group. Many participants also resided in a number of different countries before migrating to Australia. This eventuality placed them in a unique position to

\textsuperscript{41} The requirements of the University Ethics Committee stipulated written consent from a guardian or parent was required for both adolescent and pre-adolescent female participants.
experience first hand the biases associated with physical difference, power and identity existing in various cultures around the world. Comments by the participants related to experiences encountered outside Australia are also included. This provides insight into the pressures experienced by women from around the world to conform to expected standards of beauty and an insight into the cultural biases experienced prior to their arrival that may still impinge on their sense of beauty and female beauty ideals. Participant interviews highlight the ways in which these biases are reinforced and perpetuated upon migrating to Australia, thereby contributing to the negation of a positive identity and self esteem.

1.6 Introduction to Interviewed Participants

It became apparent that an image (photo) of the participants would visually illustrate the physical features being discussed. Consequently, it was decided to formulate a second consent form requesting permission to identify the participant. Following the submission and approval of the revised consent form by the Ethics Committee, the participants were forwarded the form to sign. Anonymity was regarded as an important element for consent by some participants who had divulged highly personal material. For those participants wishing to remain anonymous a pseudonym has been used and their image obscured. For those who consented to being identified an image edited from the video taped recording is included. As a result of obtaining the image by this method the image is sometimes slightly distorted.
AFRICAN

Name: Hélène Telclmariam.
Age Range: 30-40.
Heritage: Mixed European and Ethiopian/African.
Parents Cultural Background:
French mother/Ethiopian father
Place of Birth: Ethiopia/Africa.
Migration History: Hélène moved to Kenya from Ethiopia at the age of ten. From Kenya, Hélène migrated to France. From France, Hélène migrated to Israel where she lived for five years before marrying an Australian man of Iranian heritage. Hélène migrated to Australia in 1994 where she has been living ever since.

Name: Rebecca Mesbah.
Age Range: 30-40.
Heritage: Mixed European and Ethiopian/African.
Parents Cultural Background:
French mother/Ethiopian father
Place of Birth: Ethiopia, Africa.
Migration History: Moved to Kenya at the age of eight, and from Kenya Rebecca migrated to France. Rebecca migrated to Scotland and then Bosnia. From Bosnia Rebecca came to Australia where she lived for a short period before returning to Bosnia.

Name: Anisa Hayati
Age: 21 years of age.
Place of Birth: Born in Zambia, Africa.
Heritage: Mixed Middle Eastern/Iranian and Zambian/African heritage.
Parents Cultural Background:
Iranian Mother/Zambian father
Migration History: Anisa has lived in Australia for the past eleven years.
Social Context

Name: Adalii Ellis
Age: 29 years of age.
Heritage: Mixed African and European heritage.
Parents Cultural Background: African/American father/Irish Italian mother.
Place of Birth: United States of America.
Migration History: Adalii migrated to Korea from the United States of America before visiting Australia. Adalii stayed in Australia for a number of months before returning to Korea.

Name: Ndiliah Nghipondoka
Age: 27 yrs of age.
Heritage: African
Place of Birth: Zambia/Africa.
Migration History: Ndiliah has lived in Zambia, Angola, Israel and for the past few years Australia.

Name: Linda Fields
Age: 50 years of age
Heritage: African
Place of Birth: The United States of America. Migration History: Lived in Germany for twenty-five years before migrating to Australia in 2003 where she has been living since.
AUSTRALASIA/INDIA

Name: Gargy Ganguly
Age: 45 years of age
Heritage: Indian
Parents Cultural Background:
Indian mother and father
Place of Birth: India.
Migration History: Gargy migrated to Mauritius as a child before returning to India. From India Gargy migrated to Australia where she has been living for over ten years.

Name: Kirandeep Singh
Age: 21 years of age
Heritage: Indian heritage. (Punjab/Northern)
Parents Cultural Background:
Indian mother and father
Place of Birth: Australia
Migration History: Lived in Australia for twenty-one years.

Name: Aimi Oyagi
Age: 21 years of age
Heritage: Japanese heritage
Parents Cultural Background:
Japanese mother and father
Place of Birth: Japan.
Migration History: Aimi came to Australia in 2005 to continue tertiary studies.
Social Context

Name: Carmen Yu
Age: 22 years of age
Heritage: Chinese heritage
Parents Cultural Background:
Chinese mother and father
Place of Birth: Hong Kong
Migration History: Carmen moved to Australia during 2005 for further tertiary studies.

Name: Emily Tan McGowan
Age: 32 yrs of age
Heritage: Chinese heritage
Parents Cultural Background:
Chinese mother and father. Some Burmese ancestry.
Place of Birth: Malaysia.
Migration History: Emily migrated to Papua New Guinea at the age of eight and lived there until she was eighteen. At eighteen Emily migrated to Australia to complete tertiary studies. Emily married an Australian man of European heritage and continues to live in Australia.

Name: Claudia Kwan
Age: 21 years of age
Heritage: Chinese heritage
Parents Cultural Background:
Chinese mother and father
Place of Birth: Hong Kong.
Migration History: Moved to Australia in 2005 to continue her tertiary studies.
Social Context

Name: Lyn Riley-Mundine
Age: 47 years of age
Heritage: Aboriginal heritage. From the Waradjuri, Kamilaroi tribal groups.
Parents Cultural Background:
Mixed Aboriginal European Chinese ancestry. Identified as Aboriginal.
Place of Birth: Dubbo/Australia. Dubbo lies within the Waradjuri tribal territory.
Migration History: Lyn has moved from her tribal area to work in Sydney.

IRANIAN / MIDDLE EASTERN

Name: Faranuk Hooshman (not her real name)
Age: 33 years of age
Heritage: Iranian heritage.
Parents Cultural Background:
Iranian mother and father
Place of Birth: Iran.
Migration History: Fled to Pakistan where she lived for seven months before migrating to Australia. Faranuk has been living in Australia for over eighteen years.

Name: Nasturin Habini
Age: 41 years of age
Heritage: Iranian heritage
Parents Cultural Background:
Iranian mother and father
Place of Birth: Iran.
Migration History: Nasturin fled to Pakistan before migrating to Australia. Nasturin has been living in Australia for eighteen years.
Name: Farzanah Saberi, (not her real name)
Age: 32 years of age
Heritage: Iranian heritage
Parents Cultural Background: Iranian mother and father
Place of Birth: Iran
Migration History: Farzanah migrated to Thailand where she lived for two and a half years before migrating to Australia. Farzanah has lived in Australia for the last twenty two years.

Name: Elika Athari
Age: 18 years of age
Heritage: Iranian heritage
Parents Cultural Background: Iranian mother and father
Place of Birth: Iran.
Migration History: Elika left Iran at the age of six months and went to Pakistan where she lived for fourteen months. At twenty months of age Elika immigrated to Australia where she has been living ever since.

Name: Leva Azadi
Age: 22 years of age
Heritage: Iranian heritage
Parents Cultural Background: Iranian mother and father
Place of Birth: Venezuela
Migration History: Leva migrated from Venezuela to New Zealand. At the age of three Leva migrated to Australia where she has been living ever since.
With little research in this area the individual participant comments provide a valuable resource to the primary research. It is their personal feelings, attitudes, knowledge and experiences that shed light on the experience of non-Caucasians living in Australia. The use of their comments in the subsequent analysis provides a significant contribution enabling insight into the attitudes and experiences of non-whites residing in Australia when excluded from the socially defined criteria of ideal beauty.

1.7 Terms and Terminology

In this section I will define key terms used throughout this thesis. The use of the word ‘race’ has played a significant part in the way we have defined and identified one another throughout history. It has also played a powerful role in shaping how we see and understand ourselves. Gilman suggests human beings have traditionally used race as a means of coding social relations based on perceived biological differences. A system of meaning developed around the perceived biological differences which deemed certain features desirable or undesirable. According to Gilman this system of meaning often determined and constructed the lives and attitudes of those within it.  

This view has been challenged within scientific circles over the last forty years by suggesting the former concept of race is flawed and that a more appropriate description would be that described by ‘population genetics’. Scientists now suggest biological attributes are not fixed in the way implied by the concept of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item Chon Noriega, Race Matters, Media Matters, Media Rights, p.1. Accessed 02/04/07.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
race. For example there exist more genetic variations within populations than between them, regardless of race.\textsuperscript{44} According to Chon Nopriega there is no such thing as racial purity and variations in human behaviour among populations cannot be explained by genetics or racial differences. Nopriega suggests such variations are cultural,

Reflecting a complex world very much of our own making, one in which race is less a scientific object than a contentious category within the economy, the law, the political representation system, social movements and popular culture.\textsuperscript{45}

In this thesis the term ‘race’ refers to a group of people who possess shared physical characteristics and geographical origin. Sander Gilman argues that while race is a socially constructed category there exist ‘real’ shared genetic distinctions between groups of people.\textsuperscript{46} This is manifest in skin and eye colour, hair type, face and body shape. How meaning is attributed to these shared genetic distinctions by the dominant Australian culture can mark the way in which privileges are prescribed. For those people whose physical characteristics come closest to society’s defined ideals, status, opportunity and inclusion can result, while those whose physical characteristics are removed from this ideal may be marginalised from its centre.\textsuperscript{47}

When cultural and physical distinctions have negative associations attributed to them and are used to justify discrimination, this becomes racism.\textsuperscript{48}

Andrew Jakubowicz suggests racism can be defined as,

\begin{quote}
The set of values and behaviours associated with groups of people in conflict over physical appearances, genealogy, or cultural differences. It contains an intellectual/ideological framework of explanation, a negative orientation toward ‘the Other’, and a commitment to a set of actions that put these values into practice.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

The Macquarie Dictionary defines Multiculturalism as “the theory that is beneficial to a society to maintain more than one culture within its structures”.\textsuperscript{50} In this paper ‘multiculturalism’ refers to the living together of people from a

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. p.1.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Andrew Jakubowicz, \textit{Racism, Ethnicity and the Media}, Allen and Unwin, St Leonard, Australia, 1994, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{The Macquarie Dictionary}, The Macquarie Library Pty Ltd, Sydney, NSW, Australia, 2001.
diversity of racial backgrounds in one country. This term is explored further in chapter 2.4. titled National Identity and Whiteness.

The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary defines Caucasian as,

Of or relating to the white race as classified according to physical features, defined by law specifically as composed of persons of European, not African or southwest Asian ancestry.51

The word Caucasian is an anthropological term that divides humans into specific ethnic divisions. Caucasians belong to a major ethnic division of the human species known as Caucasoid. This division has certain distinctive physical characteristics pertaining to skin colour, with colour variation ranging from light to brown and fine hair types ranging from curly to wavy.52 The term Caucasian was first coined by Blumenbach in 1775 as a result of the geographical reference to European migration. Europeans were thought to be descended from the Aryans who originated from the North West of India and Pakistan, emigrated to the West over the Caucasus Mountains and founded Europe.53 In this thesis the term Caucasian refers to people of European ancestry, possessing white skin and generalised European physical features. The term Caucasian in this thesis is used synonymously with the terms Caucasoid, European, or White.54

The term European refers to an inhabitant of Europe, or one with ancestral origins in Europe. 55

The term white is used in this paper to describe people with European ancestral origins who identify as White; or in terms of racial classifications, known as Caucasian or Caucasoid. Previous use of the word has served to distinguish between those with black, yellow or brown skin. The term is therefore derived from the concept of race but is also used as an indicator of ethnicity.56

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54 Raj Bhopal, Glossary of terms relating to ethnicity and race: for reflection and debate Section of Public Health Sciences, Medical School, Teviot Place, Edinburgh EH8 9AG, UK. Accepted for publication 18 December, 2003. http://jech.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/58/6/441.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
The term Whiteness refers to the historical, social, political and cultural organisation which shapes white people’s lives and informs a position of power and dominance. Peggy McIntosh argues that being white “is an invisible knapsack of special provisions, assurance, tools, maps, guides, code books, passports, visas, compass, emergency gear and blank cheques”. In a study on the social construction of whiteness Ruth Frankenberg defines white as “a place where privileges are bestowed according to race”.

The term Black in this thesis may refer to a person with African, Aboriginal or Indian ancestral origins, who self identifies, or is identified as Black. It is also used interchangeably throughout this thesis to signify all non-white minority populations.

Identifying these terms allows us to move into a discussion about the cultural context for the research project.
CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL CONTEXT FOR THIS STUDY.

2.1 Historical Idealisation of Beauty

Ancient stone carvings and pictorial representations of the female body illustrate humanity’s long held practice of idealising the female body. These prehistoric artworks can be seen to reflect cultural perceptions of beauty and the social attitudes of the time. The oldest representation of the female figure is known as the Venus of Willendorf (25000 BC). Carved from stone the sculpture’s exaggerated reproductive features such as large hips, buttocks, abdomen and huge breasts are believed to reflect prehistoric society’s cultural preoccupation with fertility (Figure 1).

![Venus of Willendorf](http://www.salemstate.edu/~ekramer/images/venus%20of%20willendorf.jpg)

http://www.arthistory.sbc.edu/imageswomen/

62 Ibid.

63 http://www.salemstate.edu/~ekramer/images/venus%20of%20willendorf.jpg.

Representations of ideal female beauty were also an integral part of cultural expression in ancient Greek civilization. For artists depicting representations of the ‘ideal’ Greek female body, the image projected was eternally youthful,
The Greeks believed that beauty could be quantified by applying objective concepts such as order, proportion and symmetry. These principles formed the basis of a canon devised in the 5th century BC by the sculptor Polyclitus which laid out a concrete formula for beauty. This canon outlined the ideal mathematical proportions for the perfect human body. Polyclitus claimed the ideal head to body ratio should be 1:7, the foot should be three times the length of the palm of the hand and the length of the leg from the foot to the knee and the distance from the knee to the centre of the abdomen should be six times the length of the hand. Physical perfection was therefore viewed as something that could be mathematically determined and applied. The following image of the sculpture by Polyclitus titled Doryphoros illustrates these principles being applied to a male figure. Here the Polycletian statue stands in a classical contrapposto position where the upper body is twisted off-axis from the hips and legs. This gives the figure a more relaxed and natural appearance and was an important development in the idealised sculptural representation of the human figure initiated by Polyclitus during this classical Greek period.

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65 Ibid.
Achieving a balance between harmony and beauty in representations of the human body was considered to be divine. It derived from a belief that in determining such absolutes the artist recreated an image in conformity to its ultimate possibility, a resemblance to, or likeness of the gods. Consequently the link was made that suggested beauty was an indicator of internal virtue. During the classical Greek period, a perception existed that married the concept of goodness with beauty. The Greeks “associated beauty with goodness and named it an essential component in human excellence”. When this concept of perfection was reflected through the imagery of the human body it represented a cultural aesthetic. Greek artists, through their imagery of women in particular, commented on their cultural perceptions of gender. Their representations of women carried social inferences and symbolic meaning that played a key role in reinforcing cultural norms. By using the symbolism of jewellery and clothing, by concealing or exposing the body beneath, through the displacement of attributes, style of dress, gesture, body language and colour, artists were able to convey cultural perceptions of beauty, social attitudes and moral values. (Figure 3)

72 Figure 3
Capitoline Venus
(Capitoline Museum)

69 Janson, H.W, Janson’s Story of Painting, Harrison House, New York 1984, p. 20.
72 Greek Statue. Capitoline Venus, Available Online http://www.arthistory.sbc.edu/imageswomen/accesssed 8.7.05.
The high class women of ancient Greece were customarily confined to their houses and subsequently sheltered from the darkening effects of the sun. As a result the skin colour of the elite was light in complexion. Other women attempted to emulate the appearance of the elite by applying white lead. The Greeks idealisation of white skin colouring was reflected in their illustration and representations of woman on ceramic vessels where the ceramic decorators customarily coloured women’s skin white and men’s skin colour black.

Images of the ideal female body influenced by classical Greek and Roman aesthetics were restated during the Renaissance period (1300-1600s). Figure 5 illustrates a marble sculpture by Michelangelo of a female figure situated at the entry point to Lorenzo De’ Medici’s tomb. Its style and qualities are very similar to those of the Greek sculpture illustrated in figure 3.

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75 Figure 4

Hydria

Antimenes painter, 530-500 B.C.

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70 The meaning of the word Renaissance refers to a ‘rebirth’ of the classical period.
The idealised Caucasian body formed the basis to numerous Renaissance artworks that dealt with religious themes. Giovanni Bologna’s 1583 sculpture of the Rape of the Sabines demonstrates the reference to Greek classics as subjects (Figure 6).
During the Renaissance flesh colour in painting again emerges as a symbol of perfection. The central figures of many Renaissance paintings including those based on classical Greek allegories seen in Figure 7 and religious paintings of Christ and Mary (Figure 8) reflected a cultural perception of beauty that idealised white skin. During the Renaissance period white skin came to represent a reflection of the human qualities of inner purity, innocence and spiritual illumination and was therefore valued\(^79\) (Figure 9).


Social Context

The idealised white skin of the Caucasian female body continued to be depicted throughout the history of Western art. Reflecting the cultural ideals of the 1600s the voluptuous Caucasian female figures seen in the works of Rembrandt

(Figure 10) and Rubens (Figure 11) reflected the cultural aesthetic of this period.

**Figure 10**

*Diana’s Return from the Hunt*

Peter Paul Rubens, 1616

**Figure 11**

*Bathsheba*

Rembrandt van Rijn, 1654.

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84 *Bathsheba*, 1654, Rembrandt van Rijn, Oil on Canvas, 142 x 142 c, Paris Louvre. www.uni-leipzig.de/ ru/bilder/helden/h5-52.jpg. Accessed 07/09/05.
In the 19th century the fleshier white female body depicted in the paintings of Renoir was deemed desirable as seen in Figure 12 and 13.

![The Blonde Bather](https://www.dovercards.com/FineArt/Renoir/0486401812.jpg)  ![The Bather](http://www.icecastle.org/artwork/images/Blonde%20Bather%20(Renoir).jpg)

**Figure 12**  **Figure 13**
*The Blonde Bather*  *The Bather*
Renoir, 1881.  Renoir, 1904.

This changed to a much thinner version in the 1920s where the dress style emphasised a straighter shaped contour. However the generalised Caucasian body and white skin colour remained consistent (Figure11). According to Grogan the idealisation of thinness is a very recent phenomena dating from the 1920s. Grogan suggests the success of thinness as an ideal was the consequence of successful marketing by the fashion industry. During the 20th century, the fashion industry emerged as the cultural barometer of beauty standards in wealthy industrialised nations. Until the 1920s hand drawn illustrations were used to illustrate fashionable clothing styles (See figure 14). The increasing use of photography in the 1920s allowed the idealisation of women to be broadly distributed through the mass marketed fashion magazines.

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85 *The Bather*, Renoir, dovercards.com/Fine%2520Art/ Renoir/0486401812. Accessed 07/09/05
88 Ibid.
Trends in female body shape changed constantly throughout the 20th century with minor modifications occurring almost every decade. In the 1930s and 40s the more voluptuous figures of Jean Harlow (Figure 15) and Mae West (Figure 16) epitomised the ideal of the time.

This ideal continued during the 1950s where the voluptuous curves of Marilyn Monroe (Figure 17 & 18) and Jane Mansfield (Figure 19) were broadly acclaimed. Hollywood in conjunction with the fashion industries promoted thin waists, large breasts and slim legs. Women were encouraged to stay at home following the Second World War and femininity became associated with reproduction and domesticity. This led to fashions that emphasised the breasts and straight figure hugging skirts accentuating rounded hips.
Figure 17

Marilyn Monroe

1950s

Figure 18

Marilyn Monroe

1950s

Figure 19

Jane Mansfield

1950s


In the 1960s there was a move away from the voluptuous curves of the 1950s to a thin waif-like figure devoid of curves. This was first introduced with Katherine Hepburn (Figure 20) who subverted the feminine image by wearing trousers with flat shoes and Audrey Hepburn (Figure 21) whose slim rather than buxom figure was portrayed as a symbol of sophistication rather than sexuality.

The trend towards thinness and the shapeless contour heightened during the 1960s when the flat chested fashion model Twiggy became the role model for a generation of young women (Figure 22). Weighing approximately 43 kilos, Twiggy's boyish physique epitomised the female ideal promoted by the fashion industry of the period.98

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Height increased during this period. Alan Mazur (1986) revealed that during this decade Miss America winners increased in height by up to two and a half centimetres and reduced in weight by up to 2 kilograms. According to Grogan this trend appeared across both Europe and the United States. Studies revealed the portrayal of the female body in the media became consistently thinner between the 1960s and 1980s.

During the 1980s a new emphasis emerged which stressed that the ideal body should not only be slim but physically fit, strong and lithe in appearance. Sarah Grogan cites the more physically toned bodies of Jane Fonda (Figure 23) and Victoria Principal (Figure 24) as examples of the ideal popularly portrayed through the television and print media of the period.

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During the 1990s a range of female body ideals operated simultaneously. For example, heroin chic seen in figure 26 (a street inspired style associated with the drug culture) operated alongside the athletic/sporty ideal; (the well-toned muscle defined image associated with health and fitness seen in the images of Principal and Fonda) (Figure 23 & 24). A number of physical characteristics and attitudes were shared among the range of ideals in existence during this period. One attitude that pervaded all ideals was an abhorrence of body fat. Another was Western society’s conditioned predisposition towards the Caucasian body; that is, young, thin, tall and white. It was during this period that models such as Kate Moss emerged whose physical characteristics were very similar to Twiggy (Figure 22). Grogan suggests that while the three top models of this period did not fit this emaciated profile, designers and magazine editors often selected models of this body type to advertise their clothes and beauty products.

At the close of the 20th Century and the start of the 21st, the generalised Western female body ideal remains young, thin, tall and Caucasian. The physical characteristics associated with being Caucasian continue to feature in defining aspects of ideal beauty. These features include a particular bone structure in relation to physical build and facial features, narrow hips, the slender ankle, long legs, the large eye shape with double lids, the pointy nose with protruding nose bridge, a tapered jaw, high cheekbones, and thin body with comparatively large breasts, blonde hair and blue eyes (Figures 27, 28).

While these figures do not accurately represent the appearance of the majority of Caucasian women the ideal has become iconic and inspires many aspiring singers, film and television personalities to conform to these characteristics. In figure 29 and 30 playboy mogul Hugh Hefner surrounds himself with a plethora of women who embody the features illustrative of the current Caucasian/European ideal.

In the weekend edition of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 2006, Chris Johnson noted the similarities of appearance between partners of highly...
successful Australian sportsmen who attended a prestigious sporting function. In the article headed 'I'll Have What He's Having', Johnson remarked on the uniformity of physical features possessed by the women in attendance. These included long blonde hair, big white teeth, golden tans and plunging revealing necklines.\(^{114}\)

![Image](image_url)

\(^{115}\) Figure 31

**Women fitting the European Ideal partnering Australian Sportsmen**

*The Sydney Morning Herald*

While the body shape preference throughout history has oscillated between the voluptuous female figures seen in the works of Rembrandt and Rubens and the present slim ideal seen in figure 26, the Caucasian body and skin colour has remained constant. Of course many artists such as Barbara Kruger and Cindy Sherman now work with those media forms in question and through their work challenge the status quo.\(^{116}\) However the role of the artist as the historical renderer of cultural perceptions of female beauty has been overshadowed by the media in its multitude of forms. Global media and marketing forces have combined to carry these ideals across national borders and succeeded in situating the Caucasian model of beauty as a global beauty standard.

In the attempt to conform to this Western standard many non-Caucasian women have endeavoured to change their racial features. By limiting the inclusion of

non-Caucasian women in media images and rewarding those women who most conform to this ideal with social prominence and admiration, the Caucasian female beauty ideal is reinforced as the cultural beauty standard. Several well known non-Caucasian models and performers have adopted Caucasian characteristics such as dying dark hair lighter, straightening frizzy hair or wearing contact lenses that change the colour of their dark eyes to light. Some celebrities are employed in advertising for their recognition value but have the physical characteristics of their cultural grouping manipulated to fit in with a European appearance. For example Figure 32 and 33 shows Jennifer Lopez’s Latino heritage as a dark haired olive skinned beauty.

Figure 34 and 35 illustrate the reconstruction of her image into a more European appearance. The degree of skin whitening and hair lightening renders Lopez almost unrecognisable in these digitally altered images. In negating the physical features of her Latin heritage the advertisement designers are then able to exploit the luminous quality of her now white skin to promote the fragrance ‘Glow’.

118 Ibid
The anglophiling process is repeatedly evident among images of famous entertainers such as the Latino actress Christina Milian. Figure 36 shows Christina dark, olive skinned and with dark brown hair and eyes. Figure 37 shows her hair colour has been changed from dark brown to white blonde, blue eye shadow hints at blue eye colour and the skin colour has been lightened.

Beyonce Knowles is another well known entertainer seen in the following figures (38 and 39) where this pattern is duplicated. Dennis Dunleavy, Professor of Communications at Southern Oregon University, noted the controversy that has occurred around the practice of digitally rendering coloured peoples’ skin tones lighter in glossy print magazines in an online article, ‘Beyonce Knowles Skin Shade on Mag Cover Raises Digital Manipulation Debate’.¹²³ In particular Dunleavy commented on the inclusion of Beyonce Knowles on the front cover of *Vanity Fair* thereby stimulating debate over its manipulation of Knowles’ skin colour to a few shades lighter than her actual colouring¹²⁴ (Figure 38). Further evidence of skin lightening manipulation and anglophiling practices is demonstrated by the following image of Knowles on the front cover of the German magazine *Speilfilm*. Here Knowles is portrayed as having blue eyes, fair skin and blond hair (Figure 39).

These images are in stark contrast to the following images where Knowles is portrayed as having much darker skin tones.


The images in figures 38, 39, 40 & 41 illustrate the manipulation of skin colour possible in photographic media. They also demonstrate the whitening of women of colour who are possible role models of talent and beauty for others of the same cultural heritage and race.
The two images of Halli Berri seen in Figures 42 and 43 also illustrate the practice of digitally rendering famous non-white models and personalities lighter in photographic representations. Berri in Figure 43 is shown to be much lighter in skin colour than in figure 42. The changes made to non-Caucasian actresses such as Naomi Campbell (Figure 44 & 45) and Halli Berri including skin lightening, eye colour alterations and hair straightening all conform to a Caucasian appearance. Like Naomi Campbell (figures 44, 45, 46) Berri’s physical frame and facial features conform to the Caucasian ideal. Those signs of her African American ancestry such as her darker skin colour are sometimes manipulated to keep her appearance within an acceptable level of conformity. In all other respects she, like Naomi Campbell, (figure 45) reflects a large number of the ideal physical features of the Western female body.

The practice of rendering dark skinned models, entertainers and performers lighter than their actual colour is part of the politics of skin colour. Through the reward of increased representation in the film and print media, the desirability of white skin colour and European features is restated and reinforced.

Whether you call it ‘colorism’ or the ‘color complex,’ the politics of skin tone play an active role in the African-American community. The groundbreaking 1992 book ‘The Color Complex’ brought the phenomenon of favoritism toward light-skinned blacks into the mainstream. It traced its origins to America’s slave-holding past, when white masters mated with their African slaves. But colorism’s grip on society continues into the 21st century. You see it in the honey-colored hootchies who reign in R&B and hip-hop videos. You see it in the faces of golden-toned celebrities --

Social Context

Halli Berry, Queen Latifah, and Beyoncé -- whom major cosmetic companies hire to endorse their products. The practice of digitally manipulating skin tones in conformity with stereotypes raised controversy in 1994 when both Time Magazine and Newsweek featured the same mug shot of O. J. Simpson on its front covers (Figure 47). The Newsweek cover published the original mugshot whereas Time Magazine digitally manipulated the image to portray Simpson as much darker, blurrier and unshaven. As a result Simpson appears more sinister in the darkened image.

Figure 47
Mug Shot of O. J. Simpson on cover of Newsweek and TIME Magazine

The digital manipulation of skin tone is evident in the following advertisement (Figure 48) for hair dye featuring women from a variety of racial backgrounds. In this advertisement the women’s skin colour has been altered to be tonally similar and within a very even range. Any racial variation would be indiscernible if skin colour was the only visual cue. The Caucasian model is placed prominently at the front left hand side of the image followed by the African American who is positioned slightly back and lower down. The Asian model is situated even further back than the African American and lower again.

Social Context

The white model's size and elevated position allows her to gaze out from a position of height, whereas the African American and the Asian model look up at the anticipated viewer. While racial diversity is included in this image, the status of each race is suggested by the positioning of its members. The inclusion of women from different races is used by the advertisement to support their claim that we should "Take colour to the limit" although the digital imagists have neutralised any variation in racial skin colour by homogenising it to a 'one colour fits all' approach. In addition to the skin colour being neutralised the racial physical features of each model also fit into a narrow band of acceptability. None of the women in this advertisement from different races are too different from the white European 'norm'.

![L'Oreal Hair Dye Advertisement](image)

Figure 48

Loreal Hair Dye Advertisement
2004

This issue of diverging too far from the parameters of acceptability was raised by one primary research interviewee in relation to beauty pageants. Beauty pageants were identified as an area where conforming to the defined parameters of acceptability became problematic for women from some races. It had become evident to Lyn that women selected to model in beauty pageants were chosen on particular criteria which excluded races whose physical features were considered to depart from the parameters deemed acceptable to the Western aesthetic.
For instance if you have a look at beauty contests and things like that; at the range of the girls that are often picked out, then they're not from certain cultural groups. So none of them are really dark and none of them are from any sort of cultural group that is too different, they are all within a particular range. So I think that that's really interesting why that occurs but I believe that the people that are running those things don't actually see it and I guess that if it was really pointed out to them they might be horrified or would just deny that it's happening. So I think there are some big changes needed in this society.

Gargy Ganguly also commented on the role of beauty pageants and the feelings of pride she experienced when Indian women were selected as models of ideal beauty.

Recently all the beauty competitions have been won by Indian women in the last couple of years so they have been in magazines etc. and it does make me feel very proud actually, to see that girls who have grown up in India have been considered beautiful by everybody in the world. Certainly it makes me feel very proud of who they are and to see how they carry themselves in front of all these other very beautiful women from all over the world.

However the following figures illustrating the Indian Miss World of 2000, Miss World of 1994 and Miss Universe 2000 all appear very similar to the Caucasian ideal. (49, 50, 51) A number of features are possessed in combination by each contestant, such as the Caucasian features of light eye colour, high cheek bones, large eyes with double lid, protruding nose with bridge and tapered jaw. In addition to these features the models possess relatively fair skin colour in comparison to the average Indian.
through cosmetic surgery, dieting and cosmetics was experienced by contestants. 142

Hélène suggests African models are also under constant pressure to change and maintain a more European physical appearance.

All these Ethiopian or Somali models have all had to straighten their hair, had to make their eyes different in colour, I know they’ve done a lot of work on their skin colour so that it’s nice and even, and they don’t eat anything because naturally their body’s going to turn into this Greek amphora style, so I know they go through a lot of hardship to keep their bodies nice and straight. They don’t have this Swedish look but they want this Swedish look because that’s their way of earning a living.

From beauty pageants to movies, high profile entertainers, personalities and models, Western perceptions of beauty are closely adhered to. Variables appear when the ‘ethnic look’ returns to vogue or designers need exotic models to promote a particular collection. When black models and personalities are included more often than not they appear to be light skinned black women such as Halli Berri or dark skinned models (made lighter) with Caucasian features such as Naomi Campbell. Those women from non-European backgrounds who have achieved prominence often alter racial characteristics to conform to the societal ideal.

2.2 The Role of Images: Influence and Function

Representations of whiteness in the media are constituted within a discourse of race. A common theme within this narrative is fear and a politics of division. A representation of blackness is ‘racialised’ as the other and whiteness is represented as the mainstream. Media discourse continues to play a significant role in constituting the symbolic markers of an Australian identity which aims at maintaining white privilege as being in the national interest and social inequality as natural.143

One important function in the construction of images of idealised female beauty is its ability to promote an ideological agenda. Bell hooks argues images are political as they reflect the way power is constructed within a society. “The politics of domination informs the way the majority of images we consume are

142 Ibid.
constructed and marketed. Images play a crucial role in defining and controlling the political and social agendas to which both individuals and marginalised groups have access. Figures 52, 53 and 54 illustrate the way in which advertisements are imbued with political commentary and ideological agendas.

Advertisements for products in women’s Magazine associating the Caucasian ideal with the Australian flag.

Advertisements for cosmetics in women’s Magazine associating the Caucasian ideal with the American flag.

It could be argued that beauty pageants use white standards to judge contestants and suggest therefore the more Caucasian your appearance, the more beautiful you are perceived to be. Since 1958 the Chinese community in America, as part of Chinese New Year celebrations has organised a Miss Chinatown Beauty Pageant. The popularity of the pageant has made it one of the New Year celebration’s highlights, attracting large numbers of tourists and offering Chinese girls a platform to celebrate ethnic identity. However contestants in one study indicated they were aware that the criteria for winning were based on conformity to the Caucasian beauty standard. The Western Caucasian ideal which defines desirable physical features as including large eyes, a high-bridged narrow nose, large breasts and long legs excludes most Asian women who do not possess these physical traits. Contestants in one Beauty Pageant suggested, “It was obvious those girls with height had it”. Another contestant when asked if she had any features which would make her stand out responded that her eyes being larger than those of the other girls might be an advantage. The emphasis on conforming to Caucasian beauty standards resulted in psychological and emotional burdens for many contestants. In preparing for the competition, subtle and overt pressures to alter their physical appearance

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141 Ibid.
By associating the visual cues of the Australian and American flag with the colours of the advertised product (Tommy Fragrances, Sportsgirl and Sass Bide clothing) the advertisers are able to tap into nationalist sentiment whilst at the same time promoting the superiority of a specific ideological agenda. An analysis of the image reveals the central characters are young, white, healthy, happy, autonomous, affluent and ‘Western’. When viewed from a position in the world where such a state is not readily available this image may generate a desire for the same material benefits as those available to most Western countries. This image is indicative of the narrative which restates and reenforces white power in the media along with a political and social agenda.

Constructing images that reflect the power structures within society plays an important role in the maintenance of this system. It is achieved by presenting white as the ‘norm’ and including non-whites to reinforce the ‘desirable’ white position.  

Opening a magazine or book, turning on the television set, watching a film, or looking at photographs in public spaces, we are most likely to see images of black people that reinforce and reenforce white supremacy.  

This advertisement promoting the sale of contact lenses, communicates a great deal more than a consumerist message. The image (Figure 55) illustrates how a non-white is able to acquire the blue eyes of her Caucasian friend by purchasing the advertised blue coloured lenses. The message suggests that the non-white would aspire to conform to the European ideal. Figure 55 illustrates an example

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150 Ibid.
of non-Caucasians being utilised in media advertising for the purposes of supporting the desirability of changing non-Caucasian features in line with a more Caucasian profile.

Imagery in the Australian media can be seen to communicate the cultural agendas of white people. Maintaining control in the hands of white people has enabled Australia’s media, politics and education systems to exert control over definitions of themselves and of others. Determining the way in which images of particular races are represented gives the creators of those images enormous power over how others are understood.\textsuperscript{153}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{teens.png}
\caption{Front Page Headlines Featuring Australian Teens of European Heritage 
\textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} January, 2005}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{154} Figure 57

Figure 57 appeared on the front page of \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} on the 22-23 January 2005. Under the title heading runs a strip of images and text highlighting the major stories of interest inside the paper. In this image two young white females are represented as an illustration of contemporary Australian youth embarking on the next stage of their lives following the completion of secondary schooling.

Inside the newspaper on page 31, the reader is presented with the original photo (Figure 58) comprised of young women of different cultural backgrounds, with

the two ‘white’ representatives on the front cover positioned either side of the group. The two figures whose physical characteristics remain closest to the white female body ideal had been carefully edited, cut and pasted to exclude the women with Asiatic features and placed on the front page of the newspaper to ‘stand for’ the typical Australian youth embarking on a new future. In addition to the selected girls’ white skin colour both girls were dressed in white. The relevance of this will be discussed in the chapter dealing with stereotypes.

![Figure 58](image)

Inside Advertised Article: Original image revealing mixed race composition

*The Sydney Morning Herald* January, 2005

Hong argues that an individual’s social identity is developed from identification with others. Messages received from the media contribute to an individual’s understanding of themselves and the world.

> The mass media produces representations of the social world, images, descriptions, explanations, and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works as it is said and shown to work.\(^{156}\)

The role played by the mass media, according to Hong, is not neutral, as it teaches us lessons that are biased towards whites.\(^{157}\) He argues as our knowledge of ‘others’ is often learned from the mass media and how we know

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155 Ibid. p. 33.
156 J. Hong, ‘ADV Gender, race, and age in TV commercials’, Online [link](http://list.msuk.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0109n&L=ajejmce&D=0&P=1841 AEJMC Conference Papers <AEJMCF@LIST.MSU.EDU> Wed, 5 Sep 2001).
157 Ibid.
ourselves as cultural members and understand our interaction with others is often determined by mass media representations. The media is therefore a powerful force in the normalising of whiteness as it promotes ideals which conform to particular standards of appearances, roles and activities.\footnote{158}

The psychological response by many non-whites to the lack of images of ideal beauty which include their particular features varies.\footnote{159} Gilman believes all groups who are labelled ‘different’ to the dominant group are required at some stage to acknowledge the cultural and geographical situation they find themselves in although how each person responds to this will vary.\footnote{160} Individuals may respond by:

1. Internalising the negative stereotypes and labels which can result in self-destructive attitudes (such as self-loathing) and behaviours.
2. Giving in to the stereotype and surrendering to the power of the image.
3. Using the stereotype to facilitate a means of resistance.\footnote{161}

Gilman suggests the greater an individual identifies with the values of the dominant society the more affected they are by such images.\footnote{162}

Statements from participant interviews revealed how each individual responded to the idealising of the European female body as the current beauty standard and to which of Gilman’s three categories they belonged. The majority of the participant responses mirrored the behaviours listed in the first criteria, internalising the negative stereotypes and labels which resulted in self-loathing and destructive behaviours. For example Adalia Eliss, an America of mixed African /European heritage, recalls:

\begin{quote}
I did recognise that European features were seen as beautiful and that does a lot to a child’s self esteem especially if they’ve come from an African American background or a mixed heritage. I think for me as a child it was very difficult to come to terms with being mixed. Not only was beauty and everything else like in the media white, but in the classroom, I noticed that the white children in my class were treated differently than me and the other black kids and that had more of an impact than what I saw on the media.
\end{quote}

\footnote{158}{Ibid.}
\footnote{159}{Ibid. p. 3.}
\footnote{160}{Ibid. p. 3.}
\footnote{162}{Ibid. p. 9.}
According to hooks, parents have attempted to counter similar expressions of self-loathing and marginalisation by young children and adolescents, by positively affirming their unique features. The undermining influence such Eurocentric beauty standards have on the self-image and self-esteem of black adolescent youths led hooks to observe that,

Despite the best efforts of many parents to instil in their children an appreciation for their unique beauty, many young girls still believe that ‘straight hair is more beautiful than curly,’ and that ‘lighter skin makes one more worthy, more valuable in the eyes of others.’

Comments by Emily reveal the internal dialogue and struggles an individual may experience when confronted with their ‘otherness’. Emily had migrated at the age of eight from Malaysia to Papua New Guinea where, at her new school, the majority of students were white Europeans. Emily recalls,

I took my looks, or the way I looked, for granted when I was in Malaysia. When we moved to PNG and I moved to a situation where I was in a minority, that’s when I started sort of questioning and I didn’t take my looks for granted. I started saying, Gee I don’t have sharp features and I don’t have big eyes and my hair’s this black and I started to look and wish that I was more of the majority. I remember coming home from school once and asking Mum why she hadn’t considered marrying a Caucasian man if she had the chance, why she didn’t marry someone else beside my father so that I could have mixed genes; have, more of like an appearance I suppose, like that Caucasian appearance where I would have sharper nose, you know, lighter hair; I always wanted lighter hair, I’ve been dying my hair lighter ever since I was in grade 12, so there you go, that’s one of the influences, yeah. So I suppose the main feeling I was feeling when I was put into this context out of my cultural comfort was this constant discomfort about my looks for a long time. Especially when I was growing up. You know how teenagers are; they always want to look like their friends and look like the magazines as well.

The ability of society to contribute through its visual representations to the reshaping of identity and perceptions of self in those who are termed ‘Other’ and negatively influence the way they see themselves prompted Stuart Hall to comment:

Not only ... were we constructed as different and other within categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as ‘Other’... It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them...
to that ‘knowledge’, not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, but by the power of inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm.\textsuperscript{164}

The ability of the media to play a positive role in developing self esteem and identity through affirmative representation can be gleaned from comments by Lyn Riley Mundine. When asked about the representation of Aboriginal women in the media Lyn responded that she really hadn’t seen many. When asked how this makes her feel, she responded,

I guess because I’ve never really seen anyone it doesn’t really bother me that much because I know it’s all very biased, but when I do see somebody it really does stand out and I know that as soon as I see an Aboriginal person if there are any Aboriginals on TV or in a beauty magazine we all tend to watch that program because they’re there, they’re on that show. Like the show on TV at the moment \textit{The Secret Life of Us}, I think we watch it more because there is this young Aboriginal girl on it (Debra Mailman) if there is a show with a young Aboriginal in it we watch it. I guess that tells me I am looking for that, even though I’m consciously not aware of it, so that when somebody does appear we do focus on that. We also watch those programs because then we feel we are supporting that person.

Commenting on her experience of seeing positive representations of Asians in the Australian media and its relationship to building a positive self esteem, Emily stated,

I think that only recently have Chinese girls been portrayed in beauty magazines, television and movies. I was really surprised when one of the Bond girls recently was Malaysian/Chinese. You know people like Lucy Lui who is in the TV program \textit{Ally McBeal}; that’s a very recent occurrence. If you look at old movies usually the Chinese person played the servant or the evil villain, you know they had all the ‘bad’ film roles. There were no heroine or heroes who were Chinese but now you’ve got the Jackie Chans, you’ve got a different scope of roles that are put in a better light I suppose. I think that has a lot of influence on how people see Chinese people and how Chinese people see Chinese people. Like having them portrayed in a beauty magazine makes a difference because all of a sudden you can associate with it and go “Gee this is considered beautiful” or this person looks like me and they might have a flatter nose or slanty eyes but they’re made to look beautiful because they have a symmetrical face or yeah they’re deemed beautiful even though they have slanty eyes I suppose or even though they have features like me which weren’t considered beautiful features when I was growing up. So that’s really changed over the last ten years or so as I’m growing up. I guess if I had those types of magazines now when there are more Chinese people in them I might not have had as much … I wouldn’t have questioned my

mother as much in terms of “Why do I look so Chinese?” or “Why do I have to have a flat nose?” “Why was I born with dark skin?” Yeah, I think you associate a lot with what’s around you.

The women from non-European backgrounds interviewed for this research were acutely aware when women of their cultural grouping were represented in the media as models of success and beauty. The mixed European/Ethiopian participant Rebecca identified Naomi Campbell as a well known African model but was well aware that she did not represent their (African) racial characteristics.

According to McArthur stereotypes have the power to influence an outcome which has been arbitrarily or socially created. McArthur suggests the manner in which people from a physically distinctive category are treated by others can actually provoke the types of behaviours expected from them.

Stereotypes about physically distinctive people may begin in the eye of the beholders, but they can often end in reality. Stereotyped expectations lead people to treat members of a physically distinctive category of people in a manner that elicits the expected behaviour. Once elicited, this behaviour may be internalised into the self concept of the stereotyped group members. More specifically, since their distinctive physical appearance is likely to produce self focussed attention, these people may make self-attributions for behaviours that were in reality situationally

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induced, and may thus come to expect from themselves what others have expected (and elicited) from them.\textsuperscript{167}

Participant feedback from women taking part in this study suggests the negation of worth experienced by non-whites in Australia resulting from the lack of positive affirming imagery fills some women with despair, anguish and self-loathing. Their individual search for identity is marred by a lack of imagery that confirms their place in the world while the images that surround them often depict Caucasian features as the ‘norm’. The political and ideological nature of imagery is unique in its ability to determine not only how whites view non-whites but also how non-whites think about themselves. Inclusion of non-whites in media images which are affirming to their identity plays a significant role in contributing to the positive reinforcement of self esteem and identity.

2.3 Stereotypes

Everyone knows that it is better to be beautiful than to be ugly. There may be people who would prefer to be bad than good. Some might even prefer to be poor than rich. But we take it on faith that no one prefers to be ugly. The reason for this must be that people expect good things to come to the beautiful. Folklore tells us that beautiful girls marry handsome princes and live happily ever after. Heroes are handsome and villains ugly.\textsuperscript{168}

According to Debra Best, a researcher from Wake Forest University in North Carolina, stereotypes function to reduce uncertainty.\textsuperscript{169} For prehistoric humans it was often necessary to make quick judgements in the interests of survival. Inference or instinct was an instantaneous process which overruled a more reasoned response that took longer to process. A quick response was often critical to human survival. Evolutionary psychologist Leda Cosmides and anthropologist, John Tooby, who are directors of their respective schools at the University of California, believe the fear of ethnic groups derives from these prehistoric times when humans lived in small clans and groups of no more than 150 people. Anyone who suddenly appeared and was unknown to them was regarded as a potential threat. They were considered to be either an aggressor or a carrier of disease. The ability to recognise family and friends quickly, especially from a distance, was a fundamental survival skill.\textsuperscript{170}

According to Tooby and Cosmides, our evolutionary past has also programmed us to positively respond to certain features of beauty. They believe the idealising of beauty has functioned in our past as an important behavioural response that aided the preservation of the human species. For example, the existence of facial abnormalities was often an indicator of contagious diseases such as leprosy. As a result we learned from experience to avoid the so-called ‘ugly’. However this instinctual response has been, to a large extent, manipulated and corrupted by marketing strategies. Hollywood has played on this conditioned response and used it to form the character stereotypes that feature in films today. Examples of this can be seen in the depiction of monsters, beasts and evil characters that are often depicted with physical deformities, cranial abnormalities and skin diseases. This is illustrated in the following figures.

According to Rossiter, the marrying of certain facial features with various stereotypes of evil characters was born out of “the casualties of industrialized society”. These people included those affected by syphilis, alcoholism, insanity or those living on the fringe of society such as prostitutes and criminals. As with primitive humans, we learnt to avoid this potential threat for our own preservation.

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171 Ibid.
Research by Solomon Asch\(^{178}\) in 1946 and Edward Thorndike\(^{170}\) in 1920 demonstrated those people who embody the cultural definitions of beauty received many additional benefits. Among these benefits is an increase in attention from their teachers, a decreased possibility of being convicted of crimes, and an increased opportunity for employment.\(^{180}\) In 1999, Buckland, Lennon and Lillehun found that ‘better’ looking people are more often selected as work partners and hired more frequently. They also determined that “attractive people report significantly higher earnings than unattractive people”.\(^{181}\) Edward Thorndike described people’s conditioned response to beauty as the “halo effect”.\(^{182}\) In a world where job security is weakening and the future is increasingly uncertain, these rewards make the acquisition of beauty assume a greater importance.

The British naturalist, Sir David Attenborough, suggests the biases practised by others towards those who embody the physical ideals of conventional beauty are natural and predictable responses.\(^{183}\) He believes human beings are programmed to respond to beauty as a result of evolutionary mechanisms in our neurological

\(^{176}\) Dr Jekyll & Hyde, www.cduniverse.com/.../Dr.+Jekyll+&+Mr.+Hyde.htm. Accessed 23/10/05


development. The media exploit these evolutionary mechanisms in our neurological development.

Attenborough believes humans have an innate need to create a hierarchy within groups.

Fame is one way in which you recognize somebody in a crowd. Lots of animals live in social groups, with a social structure, including us, and you have to know the boss guy. You have to have someone that you actually enjoy looking up to because he takes responsibilities, and you have to recognize him.\textsuperscript{184}

The media is the vehicle that now provides us with the personalities that stand out in a crowd. Their unparalleled exposure on television and the print media ensures that many around the world become familiar with a plethora of famous faces. However, unlike primitive society where status within the community was a reflection of the individuals’ personal attributes and qualities, many current high profile personalities owe more to external physical attributes than internal qualities of intelligence and character. This is particularly true in relation to the profile afforded many women where intellectual ability is overshadowed by physical attributes. (Figure 66) Leda Cosmides suggests,

The problem with fame is that we confuse the famous with those who mattered to us in primitive society. Fame, then was a natural quality, your unique value to the community as an individual, based on real achievement. So Hollywood and television provide us with substitutes. But it's not a two-way transaction.\textsuperscript{185}

Research into the impact of stereotypes has established that they can significantly influence individual behaviours and performance. Steven Pinter, Director of the Centre for Cognitive Neuroscience at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a leading evolutionary psychologist, explains that “People put things and people into little boxes, give it a name, and thereafter treat the contents of a box the same”. 187

Researchers are finding the brain responds to tiny cues. A face, a few words, an advertisement can dramatically alter what we perceive, how we feel, our capabilities and even how we act. Steele found stereotypes had an impact on the highest performing students and suggested the power of the negative stereotype is most devastating if the fear is that the person is going to be judged unfairly. While investigating the stereotype claiming that African Americans are intellectually inferior, Steele found that black college students scored lower than white students on standardised tests of school achievement, aptitude and IQ when they were told the tests were measuring intelligence or if race was raised in some way. His results revealed that he could reverse these differences by convincing students that the particular tests they were undertaking were not related to intelligence.188

Stereotyping is often used by the media in combination with imagery to infer meaning. Advertising incorporates stereotypes to sell products, while the film industry uses them to create movie characters. For example small beady eyes are attributed to someone who is untrustworthy, the long large hook nose is associated with miserliness, the villain is ugly, the heroine beautiful etc. Every body part is loaded with meaning; Caucasian features are often deemed positive while non-Caucasian are negative.189

Hong suggests that media stereotypes have become accepted ways of thinking, and the disparity between the treatments of non-whites and whites by the media regarded as ‘normal’. As previously stated these stereotypes are internalised by viewers affecting both negatively and positively the self-image and identities of individuals.190 By incorporating stereotypes into the media the structure of

188 Ibid.
190 J. Hong, ‘ADV Gender, race, and age in TV commercials’,
inequality is continually reiterated. Failure to challenge this situation permits certain groups to maintain dominant positions over those subordinated by them.\textsuperscript{191}

The stereotypical dimensions of whiteness have a moral association to chastity and pureness whereas the dark skinned stereotypes have associations with the sexual ‘baser’ side of human character.\textsuperscript{192} These stereotypical ideals function as markers of who is and who is not acceptable.\textsuperscript{193} Diana Sweeney asserts advertisers for women’s magazines often employ stereotypical associations of colour to accentuate the designated properties of the advertised product.\textsuperscript{194} An additional example is evident in the following advertisement for a women’s beauty product which incorporates stereotypical associations of whiteness with ‘purity’ to promote and sell the product.\textsuperscript{195}

The double-page advertisement for a skin cleanser places an image of a young white woman with European features on the left hand side of the A4 page. Placed beside this image is a picture of the product labelled PURE ZONE. All visual cues are employed to highlight and reinforce the visual theme of whiteness with pureness. For example the blueness of the product is associated with the cleansing properties of water. To reinforce this cue the product itself is situated within the context of pure blue water reinforcing the cleansing product’s relationship to cleanliness and purity. These features merge into the whiteness of the page further building on stereotypical associations of whiteness with purity. The transparent quality of the product packaging assists in allowing the colour of the product to come into view to once again reinforce its purported purifying properties. These features, accompanied by the text, combine to reinforce the association of the white woman and the advertised product with cleanliness and purity.\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
To further accentuate the association of idealised images of white women with the positive stereotypes of purity, virtuosity and therefore desirability, historical paintings, posters, and advertisers have incorporated the 'glow' generated by whiteness to articulate these ideas.\(^{198}\)

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\(^{198}\) Dyer.


Figure 68 and 69 illustrate how advertisers often bathe the central figure in light to project luminosity, purity and desirability. The advertisement for Foundation makeup in figure 68 draws on the historical associations of whiteness with light and radiance through the moonlike luminosity of the woman’s skin and the text which reads,

Turn on the Light! New DIORSKIN PURE LIGHT, A concentration of pure light in a veil of pure lightness for a complexion that glows with incredible radiance.

Figure 69 promotes the image of the blue eyed, blonde haired, Western female body ideal as the ‘Goddess’ that is declared by the advertisement to be within every woman. The central figure’s golden hair radiates a warm halo of light with accompanying text reading, “Release your Inner Radiance”. Similarities to Renaissance paintings seen in Figure 70 can be identified, where the central goddess figure is placed high in the image’s frame appearing as a heavenly apparition. From her lofty heights she is able to gaze upon the viewer radiating a glow of inner and outer radiance. The advertisement contrasts the ephemeral image of the Caucasian ideal with the darkness of the ‘others’ clamouring after and desiring to be like her.

In 1837 Frederic Portal published a book on the symbolism of colour in which he elaborates on the negative associations attributed to the colour black. Portal viewed black as the symbolic colour of error and nothingness. His book was then used by Paillot de Montabert as a guide when writing one of the most influential manuals for artists of the period. Here the symbolic contrasts between light and dark are developed by de Montabert who suggests,

White is the symbol of Divinity or God
Black is the symbol of the evil spirit or the demon
White is the symbol of light
Black is the symbol of darkness and darkness expresses all evils
White is the emblem of harmony, Black is emblem of chaos
White signifies supreme beauty; Black ugliness
White signifies perfection, Black signifies vice
White is the symbol of innocence, Black that of guilt, sin, and moral degradation
White, a positive colour, indicates happiness, Black, a negative colour, indicates misfortune
The battle between good and evil is symbolically expressed by the opposition of white and black.²⁰²

Advertisers use the symbolic associations of darkness to convey a more sexually charged quality for their product. This is evidenced in advertisements for ‘Boss’ men’s cologne which are often contextualised in blackness. In the following image (figure 71) the colour red is linked to passion, desire and abandon while the shadowy tonings of black and brown are used to suggest the sexually charged aspects of the woman and the moment.

The stream of light touching the woman’s face reassures the viewer that the female is indeed white however the abundance of the colour black and the significant use of red, suggests the passionate sensual eroticism connected to the baser side of her character. Speaking on the symbolism of the colour red in combination with the colour black Portal states,

Black is not a colour but rather the negation of all nuances and what they represent. Thus red represents divine love; but united to black it represents infernal love, egotism, hatred and all the passions of degraded man.  

According to Dyer the moral opposition of equating white with goodness and black with all things inferior and flawed, undesirable, depraved and immoral is translated into the implied inherent qualities of both white and black people.

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This is reflected through the English language with statements such as ‘a little white lie’ to describe a lie that is socially and morally acceptable and ‘a blackened character’ to describe a person of ill repute. These points illustrate how pervasive stereotyping has become in many aspects of societal expression.

The artwork by the African American Carrie Mae Weems reflects a response to the historical practice in Western culture of stereotyping black people. In the black and white photograph, ‘Mirror Mirror’ (Figure 72) Weems caustically comments on the place dominant white culture ascribes to people of colour by referencing the children’s fairytale Snow White. Weems places herself in the photograph and mimics the well known lines of the evil Step Mother who asks the mirror who of all women is the most beautiful? The text below suggests the Mirror responds to Weems, asserting Snow White is the most beautiful and for the black woman in the image not to forget it. Through this work, Weems is able to convey to the spectator, the experience of blacks as a minority in the dominant white culture and how, through a myriad of ways, society is able to continually convey the message that whiteness equals good and beautiful and blackness equals bad/ugly.207

![Figure 72. Mirror Mirror, Mae Weems, (Black and White Photograph) 1986-87](image)

The participants interviewed for this research made a range of comments indicating their awareness of being stereotyped in negative ways by the media. The Asian women of Chinese heritage believed that women from their cultural grouping were often stereotyped as the submissive, exotic/erotic Geisha female

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type and this stereotype has become associated with the submissiveness of the ‘ideal woman’. The African women from Namibia, Ethiopia and Kenya and the Indian participant believed women from their cultural groups were most often stereotyped as the ‘spice of life’, the more erotic/exotic sexually available seducer or the primitive uneducated villager.

Hélène believes that when black women are included in any given situation this often occurs as tokenism or is commodified as the “exotic spice you can add to liven up the dull dish which is ordinary white culture”. Responding to the suggestion that images exist that include representations of black women Rebecca and Hélène replied,

I have this impression now for all these rock singers it’s like a fashion statement to have a coloured girlfriend. Like it’s a fashion item. When you look in magazines all these famous guys have a coloured girlfriend. And it’s like the exotic item.

You wonder whether it’s really because it’s a fashion thing right now that people are having this (black women), or it’s a good way of attracting attention. It always feel like she’s a nice exotic flower for the time being; whether they are going to have a long relationship with her it’s not sure but it’s like a bit of salt in your food; tastes good while it lasts and in the end they’ll marry a white woman but they have her there as a girlfriend for a little bit. Maybe David Bowie is the only one I know of who’s got a long term relationship with a woman who’s close to Ethiopian or Somali.

The following advertisement for men’s Calvin Klein cologne (figure 73) features a group of young people enjoying themselves whilst singing, playing instruments, and dancing. The two central figures of the advertisement are a young girl of African appearance and a young white male. The girl of African appearance appears intent on pursuing an intimate encounter with the white male. In contrast to the more sexually available female, the young male appears
less committed to the intimate encounter. His left arm wrapped around her waist suggests he will participate in the encounter but the fact that his eyes look down and his face is turned away from the young girl’s attempt to kiss him suggests he is less emotionally committed, aloof or interested. Rebecca’s and Hélène’s comments relating to dark skinned women in music related images appear to be supported with this advertisement.

Commenting on the use of the ‘exotic female’ in western advertising Van Zoonen quotes Williamson who suggests ‘exoticism’ is used in western media imagery to reinforce its capitalist ideological position. By representing non-Caucasian women as the ‘other’ such as old fashioned, exotic, primitive or sexually voracious the desirability of the western capitalist system is ensured. Van Zoonen suggests the popular and widespread image of the black female as a sexually voracious and insatiable wild savage was used as a moral justification by European countries for colonisation when economic exploitation was its primary motive.

211 Ibid.
Social Context

The popular and widespread appeal of the image of the ‘wild savage’ that feeds western discourses of black female sexuality, is said to have served a double purpose for European colonisation. The image of the ‘wild savage’ provided a wonderful occasion to fantasise about all that was forbidden, projecting upon colonial people the obscurities of their own unconscious. At the same time, imaging the peoples of the colonies as sexually voracious and insatiable legitimised Europe’s colonial enterprise as a project of ‘civilization’ instead of economic exploitation.212

Jean Paul Goude, past editor of Esquire Magazine and the creative director behind many well known magazine advertisements utilises the stereotype of the African woman as the wild savage to controversial ends in the following photographic images. Goude’s images of Grace Jones naked and caged in figures 74, 75 and 76 pertain to the stereotypical imagery noted by Williamson and Van Zoonen. These images illustrate the popular and widespread commercial image of the black female as a sexually voracious and insatiable wild savage.

213 Figure 74
Jungle Fever
Jean-Paul Goude
Painted Photo
New York 1978

214 Figure 75
Grace in a Cage
Jean-Paul Goude
Painted Photo
New York 1976

215 Figure 76
Carolina
Jean-Paul Goude
Painted Photo
New York, 1976

Goude’s controversial images of African women sit in stark contrast to his well known image of the young European woman Estella Warren. (Figure 77) This image depicts Warren as delicately pure, feminine and fresh, covered in an

212 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
abundance of beautiful old English pink roses. The overall impressions derived from the exposure of the white flesched breast sits in opposition to the stereotyped impression engendered by the previous three figures. This image was taken for Goude’s advertising campaign for Carcharel in Mexico, 1996 and illustrates one of many advertising images that employ positive stereotypical imagery of white women. 216

217 Figure 77

Estella Warren. Photograph
Jean-Paul Goude

Indian participant Gargy expressed similar concerns related to the negative stereotyping of Indian women in the media as ‘exotic’.

It is also a bit of a concern for me because again, women from my cultural group are always portrayed as this very exotic person who is unreal and it makes me feel, well, sad that often the real woman is lost in all this. It is the glossy, the exotic it is this unreal expectations for women to look like this goddess and I am sure these beauty queens and these women in these magazines must be spending so much of time being these, or aspiring to be, or on their way to be somewhere near that ideal of being beautiful and that is what makes me feel very sad that they can’t be who they are.

216 Ibid.
Responding to the stereotypical media representations of African women in West Zambia Nditia Nghipondoka explained her concerns that they were invariably portrayed as simple villagers in grass huts wearing traditional dress. There was a concomitant lack of images of Zambian women who were educated, attractive and urbanised.

The women of Iranian heritage believed Middle Eastern women are routinely stereotyped in the media as being covered or clothed in black and hysterical after experiencing some natural disaster. Farzaneh and Faranuk both commented,

I think the western media does a terrible job of portraying Persian Iranian, Middle Eastern women. I don’t think it’s an accurate reflection, stereotypes are rampant. The way they show them is veiled or in full hijab because usually they’re shown when some crisis has happened like an earthquake, very emotional, crying you know.

As far as western media is concerned I really get frustrated when I see the image, even on TV, sometimes on SBS in movies they show Persian women and it’s really depressing and frustrating to me to see that’s the only way they can be is with the hijab.

The following image (figure 78) illustrates a commonly occurring representation of Middle Eastern women in the media. Here the women are completely covered in a hijab presenting the women of Islam, as victims of
Islam. According to Gemma Martin-Munoz there are three characteristics which inform the dominant representation of Muslim women in the media. One is the ‘passive attitude’ of Muslim women, their role as ‘victim’ and as ‘veiled’. They are usually portrayed as observers rather than active participants and subordinate figures suffering religious oppression. Following centuries of Western stereotypes of exotic orientalism, the veil is regarded as a sign of mystery. The assumption in the West is that being veiled implies being submissive and dominated and being unveiled equates to liberation. According to Munoz this sentiment pervades the western media.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 78

An example of Western media stereotypical representations of Middle Eastern Women

The concerns expressed by the interviewed participants were mirrored in similar research undertaken in the early 1990s for the Australian Office for Multicultural Affairs by Coupe and Jabubowicz with Randall. Feedback from over 700 people and 60 discussion groups consisting of people from various ethnic backgrounds revealed participants felt alienated from Australian culture when images and stories representative of them were excluded from the media. Participants of this study also suggested that the Australian media stereotyped the typical Australian woman as being tall, blonde, blue eyed and fair skinned and

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219 Ibid. p. 6.
were biased towards an Anglicised world view in all aspects of delivery. This included Anglo values, morals, culture, family structures and religion.\textsuperscript{223} Jakubowicz’s research revealed participants wanted the Australian media to present,

\begin{quote}
A greater range of ethnicity of presenters and actors, but also for the presentation of a greater range of ethnicity and ethnic viewpoints. Furthermore it was specified that such presentations be positive or at least that the positive and negative aspects of all ethnicities and cultures be equally represented.\textsuperscript{224}
\end{quote}

The women in my study all expressed a strong awareness of being portrayed through the western media in stereotypical ways. Non-Europeans become frustrated when media images do not accurately reflect the changes and continuities in the everyday life of women in a diversity of realities but essentialise their experience through stereotyping. This is interpreted as demeaning in contrast to the way white Western women are idealised in Western media. Stereotypical media representations serve to perpetuate a set of biased cultural expectations that denigrate a vast number of women from a diversity of cultures. Often these stereotypes are one dimensional and ignore the multidimensional realities of women from a variety of cultural and religious traditions. By examining Australia’s historical past we are better situated to question the cultural determinism presented to us. The following section explores Australia’s recent colonialist past and its bearing in situating whiteness as the norm.

\section*{2.4. National Identity and Whiteness}

This section explores the issues relating to British colonisation of Australia and the subsequent institutionalisation of white privilege. Following the arrival of Captain James Cook on Australia’s shores in 1770, Australia was declared ‘terra nullius’ and therefore available for possession by the British.\textsuperscript{225} Terra nullius meant that the land was uninhabited and was one of the few ways according to 18\textsuperscript{th} Century European Law that Britain could take possession of another country. As a result of this doctrine Australia was declared an empty land and Aboriginal sovereignty ignored.

\textsuperscript{223} Ibid. p. 172,173.
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid
In a search for a national identity during the 1800s, the descendants of the early settlers began to question the defining characteristics that distinguished them from other nations. John Maloney suggests this has been an historical practice for many new nations but “in so doing it often happens that they see in themselves characteristics which urge them to think of themselves as better than others”. This creates a situation where comparison with others allows for some members to fit the desired characteristics and others to be excluded.

During the 1880s, the practice of differentiating races based on physical characteristics gained prominence. This development was central to creating “the Australian myth in which Nordic features (derived from Germany and Scandinavia through England, Scotland and Ireland) were believed to characterise the real Australian”. This world view was institutionalised with the introduction of the ‘White Australia’ policy that operated from the 1880s, was well entrenched in 1901 when Australia became a federated nation and has shaped the world view of many Anglo Australians ever since. The White Australia policy excluded people from immigrating to Australia on the basis of skin colour, language and ethnicity. It reflected current attitudes and was also instrumental in embedding ‘whiteness’ as the norm in the Australian psyche.

Immigration practices by Australian authorities were biased towards people from Anglo Celtic backgrounds. Australians of European decent historically viewed their nation’s race as predominantly white, English speaking and culturally and intellectually British. Dr James Jupp, Director of the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies at the Australian National University suggests Australians of the 18th, 19th and much of the 20th centuries were predominantly of European extraction, British ethnicity and British nationality despite a number of immigrants from China in the early period and those who participated in the gold rushes. In 1947 immigration to Australia increased by 9 per cent following the implementation of the post war immigration program. In 1999 the number of Australians who were born overseas or from migrant

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229 Ibid.
Social Context

heritage had increased to 23 per cent. Current statistics place one in four of Australia’s 20 million people as being overseas born.

As a response to the dismantling in 1973 of the final vestiges of the White Australia Policy and Australia’s increased migrant intake from differing racial and religious backgrounds, the Australian Government established a Multicultural Policy. This policy, implemented in 1974, outlined the ideological and philosophical position of the Australian Government in regards to immigration. Updated in 1999 and 2003 the Australian Government definition states,

Australian multiculturalism is the philosophy underlying Government policy and programs that recognises, accepts, respects and celebrates our cultural diversity. It embraces the heritage of Indigenous Australians, early European settlement, our Australian-grown customs and those of the diverse range of migrants coming to this country.

While Australia is now recognised by those in authority as a multiracial /multicultural society, the power structures previously established to support ‘white’ racial and cultural dominance remain. These structures of power and privilege were established very early on in the creation of the new colonies as the Europeans transplanted their British values into the colonised state. John Docker and Gerard Fischer state that it was the practice of European colonisers when conquering another’s land to “possess it”, replace its population and establish the coloniser’s own institutions and economy. This naturally enabled the power structures to be weighted in their favour. It was in this way the British/European colonisers established whiteness as the ‘norm’ and those who differed from it as ‘other’.

Whiteness refers to the historical, social, political and cultural organisation which shapes white people’s lives and informs a position of power and dominance. Peggy McIntosh argues that being white “… is an invisible knapsack of special provisions, assurance, tools, maps, guides, code books,

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231 Ibid.
233 Ibid. p. 136.
passports, visas, compass, emergency gear and blank cheques”. 238 In a study on the social construction of whiteness Ruth Frankenberg defines white as “a place where privileges are bestowed according to race”. 239 In Australian society, the white world view is taken for granted as being ‘the way’ in which to relate to the world. Whiteness stands for racial ‘neutrality’ 240 or ‘the norm’ from which everything else is judged. Maureen Reddy supports these arguments stating, 

Our society operates in such a way as to put whiteness at the centre of everything, including individual consciousness - so much so that we seldom question the centrality of whiteness, and most people on hearing of race, hear black, that is whiteness is treated as the norm, against which all differences are measured. 241

The exclusion of physical features distinctive to women of colour in the imagery depicting female body ideals in Australian society facilitates the maintenance of white people’s position of privilege. On a global scale this practice situates the Western female body as the global ideal. By incorporating stereotypes via the mass media, notions of white superiority are affirmed and upheld. 242 The entrenchment of power in the hands of a particular race has been widely documented. Its practice on a global scale has relevance to the Australian experience. The following section explores this dimension.

2.5. Nations, Power and Race

Over the last few centuries many European countries colonised other nations, territories and islands. Their positions in these countries were those of power and influence. While many colonised countries have gained independence, the association of power with ‘whites’ remains well embedded in the psyche of many non-white races. The American/Korean artist Yong Soon Min recalls her experiences with American GIs in Korea during the years 1953 to 1960 which aligned the association of wealth, freedom and status with a colonising power. 243

At that time, Korea was recovering from a devastating war and it seemed so exotic to me that she (her mother) was working with Americans. They were always the...
rich people in my mind and as a result of her working there we would get some American products like Ritz Crackers, which I thought was just so wonderful. It was the biggest treat and a lot of these products could be found at that time only in the black market. American products were so expensive and so prized for a lot of Koreans who did not have anything. Every Christmas time she would give us some gifts that the Gls had given her to give to us, toys that we never had growing up. From that experience I had this notion of the American dream that a lot of foreigners have when they come from a deprived situation, where they think America is the land of plenty, where all your dreams come true.244

This historical association of whites with power and privilege is another contributor to dissatisfaction over physical appearance among many non-white women. The adoption of European standards of beauty by women in many previously colonised countries is the consequence of what is termed a ‘colonial mentality’. The colonial mentality refers to a cultural notion of inferiority among populations previously conquered and colonised by foreign nations. Those adopting such a mentality attribute everything positive and desirable to the colonisers. This reinforces the belief that the colonised peoples are psychologically and intellectually subordinate.245 This attitude results in a lack of ethnic pride, feelings of cultural inferiority and an inability to articulate ethnic identity.246

Advertising capitalises on this pre-existing association in developing countries by utilising advertisements unaltered from the form devised in the original host country. Many of these advertisements incorporate idealised imagery of Western female beauty in combination with the consumer product. This contributes to further pressure to emulate prosperous foreign lifestyles and adopt western values.247

It has long seemed self evident that the spending patterns in poor countries are influenced by the consumption behaviour of richer societies…. Recent economic analyses of consumption in developed countries combined with the sociology of modernisation suggest that status-seeking, emulative behaviour may play an important role at the international level as well as within individual countries.248

 Seeking status based on appearance motivates consumers to aspire to those things that by association bring status. Commenting on the power of appearance Wendy Capkis states,

244 Ibid.
248 Ibid. p. 317.
Appearance talks, making statements about gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class. In a sexually, racially and economically divided society, all those visual statements add up to an evaluation of power.249

This statement, I suggest, is relevant to the growing appreciation and desire by non-Europeans for physical features associated with the Western ideal. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Japanese women view the company of attractive Western men as a status symbol.250 Hiroshi Wagatsuma’s comments in relation to two female Japanese college students in California who would only date Caucasian males have been retold by Dyer. On a micro level the assumption is that associating with another individual who has status brings status to oneself. If this argument is extended to its logical conclusion then perhaps adopting the physical characteristics which are indicative of a more powerful country or culture may, through association, also bring status and empowerment.

This example further builds on Capkis’ claim that “a woman dressed in money has been assumed to be making a statement not about herself but about her man”.251 If this statement is true, then perhaps the adoption of characteristics by other races which are consistent with the European female body ideal says something about the perceptions of political economic and financial power non-Western countries have about the West. By adopting the Western ideal it could be argued that they are expressing their desire to also attain the same degree of status, power and influence.

Sander Gilman suggests that the increased desire by many non-whites to conform to a European ideal is informed by the globalisation of Western political and cultural power and the accompanying imagery which reinforces it. Gilman states that, “Body imagery follows the lines of political and cultural power”.252

The global exportation of the Caucasian ideal by Western media and capitalistic business interests has contributed to the subversion of traditional notions of beauty in non-Western societies. Many women believe by removing specific racial features and conforming to a European appearance they will be happier.

and more successful. Statements made by a young Fijian woman who adopted
the Western ideal following the introduction of Western television programs
support this hypothesis. She expressed her rationale for striving to attain at least
one Western ideal by stating, “I watched the women on TV, and they have jobs.
I want to be like them so I’m working on my weight now.”\(^{253}\)

The increased availability of cosmetic surgery procedures has facilitated the
removal of racial characteristics and enables individuals to ‘pass’ as white. In
many cases the motivation to undergo such reconstructive surgery is to gain a
Western appearance and thereby increase one’s ability to earn a larger salary,
attract better marriage prospects and ensure personal happiness. The desire for
an eyelid operation by many Canadian Asians was explained by the surgeon Dr
Robert Stubbs, who suggested that his patients believed acquiring Western
physical features would help them get better jobs and fit into Canadian society.
For these women Stubb says, “Beauty is power and beauty plus money is
double trouble”.\(^{254}\)

For many non-whites, lack of power translates into lack of opportunity in
relation to employment opportunities, marriage prospects, education, health,
and wealth. For Hélène, the day to day hardship associated with every day
existence in many parts of Africa was an additional incentive for many African
women to want to marry a European.

I also know that African women always also feel that they will be
happier in the end if they have a western husband because the
standard of life with an African man is a lot tougher.

There is presently a gross inequity in the distribution of the world’s wealth and
resources. The West is disproportionately more affluent than many other
countries where people live in deprivation and hardship. The standard of living
mostly available to Europeans, Australians and Americans, the health and
education resources, travel opportunities, employment opportunities, clean

Available Online: \url{http://www.iup.edu/xvkh/e24.htm}.
water, standard in housing and freedom of speech are aspects people of developing countries can only dream about. The fact that depictions of the very poor parts of the US, Europe and Australian communities are excluded from transnational advertising results in those living in third world countries having expectations that are often not matched by reality.\textsuperscript{255}

This inequity in the distribution of wealth, opportunity and lifestyle is an additional factor that fuels body dissatisfaction among many non-Caucasians. In summary, a combination of factors fuels this expression of body dissatisfaction among non-Caucasian women. These factors include the global distribution of imagery conveying the Caucasian female body ideals by the West’s powerful media, the association of the Caucasian with power following periods of colonial rule and a desire by non-Caucasians for the same economic privileges available to Caucasians.

\section*{2.6. The Media and Globalisation}

Capitalism is helping to spread (white) Western values across class, and ethnic lines. These values are being transmitted via satellite to television sets across all cultures. Increasingly, non-Western societies will be presented with an ideal of feminine beauty that takes on Anglo Saxon traits. As non-Western women attempt to meet the ideal, they may deny the very features that give them their racial and ethnic identity - and their unique beauty.\textsuperscript{256}

While the media plays a significant role in the dissemination of visual imagery of predominantly Caucasian representations of ideal female beauty, few would hold it wholly responsible for the increased desire of women from non-Caucasian backgrounds living in Australia to acquire a Caucasian appearance. The media and the images it employs cannot be viewed in isolation from its commercial context. The media in the Western world operates within a consumer/capitalist society and this relationship has as its priority an increase in profits for business. Psychological manipulation of tastes and desires is overtly employed in advertising to increase sales. Achieving this end involves the continual production of new products along with the continual and ever increased consumption of these products by the consumer. Harnessing images

\textsuperscript{255} Recent newsreel footage of Americans in New Orleans living in poverty following Hurricane Katrina shocked many people around the world.

in the advertising of these products becomes a tool in facilitating this exchange.  

In the last few decades we have witnessed the increased influence of global media institutions and a rapid growth in transnational corporations. Media has become a transnational business enterprise whose main purpose is to generate company profits rather than to provide a public service. The globalisation of the media has paved the way for the extensive spread and promotion of commercialisation and consumerism. Of serious concern is the homogenising effect of globalisation on societies, resulting in a view of reality that is predominantly white and Western; omitting diversity of race, class, caste, ethnicity and lifestyle.

As media institutions increasingly form larger and larger international conglomerates, First World culture is distributed increasingly to developing countries.

There is little protection in many developing countries to safeguard community interests. Encroachment into the culture of people in developing countries has been facilitated by the lack of laws or advertising standards protecting local content and culture. The amount of time devoted to advertising through both radio and television is greater in developing countries than developed countries and local people in these countries demonstrate an increased belief in advertising claims.

The social acceptability of a person’s physical characteristics as well as their standing in comparison to others is informed by comparisons. By inducing social comparisons with idealised images of female beauty in advertisements expectations and desires among women are raised. A number of psychologists and researchers such as Australian researcher, Associate Professor Susan Paxton, a Melbourne University Health Psychologist, have attempted to document how exposure to particular images of ideal female beauty in magazines and other media sources, triggers a psychological response which impacts on self esteem and identity.

260 Ibid. p. 319.
261 Ibid.
In 2000, Paxton documented the effects of media images on young girls. Results confirmed that when women are exposed to media images of the idealised female shape there was an immediate impact on how they felt about their own bodies. Women in this study internalised these images and compared their own bodies to the images in the media. This process, it is believed, plays a vital role in how the media adversely affects the body image of many women that can then lead to eating disorders. The results of Paxton’s study found nearly 50 per cent of girls in their early to mid teens have an immediate surge of depression or dissatisfaction with their bodies after seeing pictures of slim models. Following a very short exposure to media images of thin models the young girls surveyed in Paxton’s research demonstrated an immediate response with negative feeling and attitudes towards their own bodies. Paxton suggests repeated exposure by young girls to these images could produce accumulative negative effects that may further contribute to eating disorders and body dissatisfaction. The researchers questioned 280 girls in year 7 and 10 about satisfaction with their bodies. They asked how much they compared their bodies with others and how they rated thinness as a factor in attractiveness and their self esteem. From this research Paxton gleaned that girls learn very early on in their development to compare themselves to others. This practice makes them susceptible to the negative effects induced by exposure to media imagery that idealises thinness.

The role of social pressure in providing an impetus to an individual’s need to conform to a particular body shape ideal was first explored in 1954 by Leon Festinger via his Social Comparison Theory. Festinger’s theory suggested women derived an increased sense of self worth based on conforming to the prevailing norms for thinness and attractiveness. Because women compare their appearance to others, individuals are vulnerable to comparisons with media images. Lyn Heinburg and Kevin Thompson extended this research in the 1990s by substantiating the Social Comparison Theory claim. It suggested that women who were aware of society’s ideals and then internalised these were at an increased risk of developing body image disturbance. Socio-cultural

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264 Ibid.

265 Ibid.

pressures were found to play a significant role in body image dysfunction. Additional research also demonstrated the role of the media in contributing to body image disturbance. By depicting images of the ideal in print or film, the media provides a significant vehicle for comparison and internalisation to occur. The media defines and portrays the body to be desired and the aspirations to be sought and women in turn have tended to use these images as a cultural barometer representing the feminine ideal. Consequently, women have become adept at constantly comparing and monitoring themselves in relation to this ideal.

In non-Western countries a significant conduit for the transmission of Western ideas of female beauty is through advertising media images. Transnational advertising attempts to commercialise all aspects of people’s lives including culture, values and lifestyles. While advertising is not the sole source of information it plays a pivotal role in illustrating the availability of material possessions, living standards and offers comparisons to wealth and images of ideal beauty.

Western media and culture has marketed the Western female body ideal globally and its permeation is having an undermining effect on other races. A sense of attractiveness and physical beauty among non-Caucasians is now constantly measured against the Caucasian ideal. Niva Piran, a clinical psychologist at Toronto University, believes we are seeing a homogenisation and globalisation of beauty ideals. “It’s white. It’s thin. And the result is that people come to identify less with their own cultures and more with an image in the media”.

271 Susan McLelland, ‘Distorted Images’ – Western Cultures are Exporting Their Dangerous Obsession with Thinness, Macleans, August 14, 2000, p. 41.
In many countries, International, usually American owned ad agencies dominate the local advertising market and work closely with their transnational clients.\textsuperscript{272} Advertising used in developing countries is often unaltered from its original format in a First World country. This contributes additional pressures on women within those countries to emulate Western idealised images. For example the cosmetics company Revlon entered the Japanese market in the 1960s. Revlon was able to capture a large slice of the market by using American advertisements with American models. The success of this method led other Western companies to emulate Revlon’s strategy which became the model for those who followed suit.\textsuperscript{273} It is an impression held by Japanese participant Aimi Oyagi, that 40 per cent of idealised images of women used in Japanese women’s magazines incorporates Caucasian models. Apart from advertising, the media flow of movies and print into developing countries contains a steady stream of images promoting First World culture. Movies and other media forms reinforce statements about the availability of material possessions, living standards and values and increases people’s expectations and desires.

Hollywood, a handful of production and distribution companies that are owned by various global corporations, supplies films to half the world’s cinemas. The goods and services depicted in these movies become desirable without aid of a formal advertising structure.\textsuperscript{274} These media outlets function as a form of indirect promotion on their own, reinforcing Western ideals, values, attitudes and lifestyles through the power of the idealised image. In relation to body image Berger in the 1970s argued,

\begin{quote}
Capitalism survives by forcing the majority, whom it exploits, to define their own interests as narrowly as possible … it is achieved by imposing a false standard of what is and what is not desirable.\textsuperscript{275}
\end{quote}

In 2005 Berger’s observations appear to hold validity when applied to the marketing of beauty ideals promoted on a global scale by Western advertising companies. Here a narrow and false standard of female beauty is being promoted and adopted by a large number of people from around the world.

Through the mass marketing of Western images and values, women are conditioned to adopt unnatural and, at times, unhealthy behaviours in order to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Margaret Allen, Selling Dreams, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1981, p. 77.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
conform to unrealistic physical stereotypes. In society today, these ideals are now being determined by organisations that produce and market beauty products by employing image makers to service their commercial ends. The physical ideals being advertised are predominantly Western/Caucasian and are unattainable for the vast majority of the women in the world.


It is the Greek contribution to the principles defining beauty in the representation of the human body previously discussed in Chapter 2, which has significantly contributed to the West’s current notions of beauty. Phidias, another Greek sculptor, was instrumental in defining the concept known as the Golden Mean (also given the name ‘Phi’ after Phidias). Phi is the rule of universal proportion which divides space into an incrementing 1/3 to 2/3 ratios. This ideal was referred to as the ‘Divine Proportion’ and was applied to everything in nature including the human body. Figure 79 and 80 illustrate the allocation of classical mathematical proportions to the sculpted human form.

Renaissance artists during the 1500s revisited the classical Greek antiquities as a source of inspiration and style believing this period represented the highest

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**Figure 79**
_Doryphoros, The Spear Bearer_  
Polycleitos, 5 C BC

**Figure 80**
_Aphrodite of Cyrene_  
Polycleitos, 5 C BC

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277 Ibid. p. 105.
expression of the human spirit. During the 19th century works by Renaissance artists became the reference point for defining the perfect body. For example the works by the Renaissance artist, Michelangelo, were used by plastic surgeons in Germany as a reference for defining the perfect female breast. The classical ideals of the body were presented as the norm in the published works of Ernst Brucke, a lecturer in anatomy at the Berlin Academy of the Arts during the 1800s who in turn influenced the 19th century plastic surgeon Jacques Joseph. Joseph determined the ideal female face from a drawing by another Renaissance artist, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) (Figure 81).

Jacques Josephs used the previous Renaissance sketch by Leonardo da Vinci (Figure 81) to gauge deviations from it.

Jacques Joseph used the Renaissance sketch by Leonardo da Vinci in Figure 81 to determine variation in degrees from the ideal nose and face profile (Seen in Figure 82). Gilman suggests this is how the Greco Roman profile was inserted into the national German ideal of beauty during the 1800s.

Albrecht Durer was another Renaissance artist whose studies were employed by the plastic surgeon Jacques Joseph to portray how features deemed ‘normal’ differed from facial features designated as ‘abnormal’. Illustrated in the figures below these categories included the Teuton, the African and the Jew.

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281 Ibid.
282 Ibid.
283 Ibid.
In addition to consulting Durer, Joseph incorporated the German classicist Godfried Schadow’s ‘canon of beauty’ which divided the face into sections. This imprecise canon was utilised by plastic surgeons of the late 19th and early 20th century as a scale by which to measure symmetry.

Plastic surgeons of this period were able to rework the physical features deemed ugly in accordance with these Western notions of aesthetic symmetry and balance, by referencing the Renaissance artworks of ideal female beauty. In this way they too became sculptors marking European features as the model for ideal beauty throughout Europe. Sander Gilman suggests,
The international universal of the Renaissance was thus grafted onto the national local as a model for beauty, as sanctioned by the aesthetic politics of the turn of the century. High art therefore becomes the model for ideal health and beauty.290

The notions of an aesthetic ideal are imposed on images of difference. Those not conforming to the defined ideals of the day are marked as ‘other’ and therefore outsiders. The adoption of Eurocentric standards of beauty as the ideal had important implications when European countries colonised other parts of the world during the years 1500 to 1900. It became the standard by which all ‘others’ were measured and its impact is being felt to this day. The negative stereotyping attributed to many racial features belonging to the Indigenous inhabitants of the lands colonised by the Europeans has been discussed throughout this thesis and is developed further in Chapter 3. The documentation by Diana Sweeney of the near total omission of the Australian Aborigine from the front covers of three major Australian women’s magazines further highlights its continuing impact today. The grafting of the European female beauty ideal onto the Australian mainstream representation of race has resulted in the near exclusion of the Indigenous face from contemporary representations of Australian female beauty; many of their unique features perceived to be unattractive to the majority of European descended Australians.

The recent advances in reconstruction surgery have provided many women with the option of surgically altering racial characteristics believed to be ‘ugly’. Plastic surgery’s referencing to European aesthetics to determine the parameters of ideal beauty, biases the ideal towards the Caucasian features and undermines the cultural ideals of others. The colonising of Australia by Europeans has resulted in the European body standard being exported with the resultant ‘Colonialist Mentality’. This bias has not only been institutionalised at a local level but perpetuated by subsequent immigrants from colonised countries who, affected by a ‘colonialist mentality’, carried with them their previous socialised attitudes when migrating to Western countries. How this is seen to impact on the lives of the participants will be discussed in the following chapter in a highly personal and intimate discussion of specific body parts.

290 Ibid. p. 148.
CHAPTER 3: BODY PARTS

This chapter examines the impact of the Western standard of beauty on individual participants from non-Caucasian backgrounds living in Australia in relation to particular body parts and perceptions of beauty. The first section examines four components related to the body, namely skin colour, thighs, buttocks, and height. The second section examines particular elements of the face such as the nose, eyes and hair. By deconstructing the body into these individual components further insights into the particular effects of the western female body ideal on non-Caucasian women living in Australia can be examined.

THE BODY
3.1. Skin Colour

In this country, the standard of beauty is the blonde, blue-eyed girl with regular features. Since communication media spread this ideal to every inhabitant of the land via television, newspapers, magazines, and motion pictures, there is no room for deviation. The girl who is Black has no option in the matter. Her blackness is the antithesis of a creamy white skin, her lips are thick, her hair is kinky, and short. She is, in fact, the antithesis of American beauty. However beautiful she might be in a different setting with different standards, in this country she is ugly.291

From colonisation to the present day, Australia has used skin colour to establish a social category of power. Institutionalised with the introduction of the White Australia policy in 1880, Australian society bestowed power in the form of cultural inclusion on those whose physical appearance conformed to this arbitrary criterion. This has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, 2.3, which highlighted the way bias has pervaded Australian society on numerous levels. The relationship of skin colour to status and therefore opportunities has resulted in skin colour assuming a position of great importance in the lives of those affected by it. White skin has become a currency, a commodity or market product in a global economic supermarket. The West’s capture of all significant centres of power and information at the global level has given world wide coverage to a notion of value originally derived from colonial and class history. Its global impact is most evident through the

global demand for skin whitening products which has emerged over the last fifty years.\(^{292}\) The manufacturing of these products is serviced by a host of international cosmetic companies from Japan, Europe, United Kingdom and America.\(^{293}\) Goon and Craven note the cheaper end of the market is served with creams such as Fair and Lovely and Godrej’s Fair Glow and Fairever. The middle range products include Avon’s VIP Fairness, Samara’s Fairness Cream and Oriflames Natural Northern Lights. At the upper end of the market prominent names such as Lancome (Blanc Cristal and Blanc Expert ranges), Yves Saint Laurent (Blanc Absolu Serum), L’Oreal Plenitude (White Perfect range), Clinique (Actually White line) Elizabeth Arden (Visible Whitening Pure Intensive) and Estee Lauder (White Light) service and perpetuate the consumer demand. The competition for the non-white woman’s dollar is made by minimising non-white femininity through the idealisation of whiteness. The positive stereotyping of whiteness with purity and femininity is made by minimising the attractiveness of a dark skin colouring.

While white women purchase these products to smooth out and even their complexion, women of colour have a different motivation. For non-whites the product is purchased in an effort to whiten the colour of their skin. Skin whitening creams are popular throughout Asia, the Middle East\(^{294}\) and Africa. The demand has also been transferred to many Western countries when people have migrated from these countries to the West.\(^{295}\) Interviews with women from Asia, Africa and the Middle East now living in Australia, supported by secondary research material, revealed India, Japan, Egypt, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines and China all idealised a fair skin colour and employed the use of skin whitening creams to achieve this end.\(^{296}\) According to a report published by the Thai Farmers Research Centre, skin whitening products accounted for the largest component of all skin care products sold in Thailand during 1988.\(^{297}\) Many of the creams are made from dangerous toxic chemicals banned in the majority of Western countries. Reported by the South African online newspaper *Dispatch*, in December 1999, an investigation

\(^{292}\) Ibid.
\(^{293}\) Ibid.
\(^{297}\) Ibid.
by the British media into the chemical makeup of skin bleaching creams sold in South Africa found many contained the chemical hydroquinone (a chemical banned in South Africa for over 10 years). The newspaper’s investigation traced the manufacturing of these creams back to a number of English cities including Bolton, Manchester, Egham and London. A raid by the British Medicines Control Unit on one wholesaler and distributor, Mash Care and Cosmetics, found thousands of illegal face creams hidden in a basement and discovered at least ten brands were made in England. An investigation by the Danish government found the skin whitening soaps and creams contained a strong hormone known as Clobetasol Propionate. This drug can cause irreparable skin damage by making the skin become extremely thin, soft and vulnerable to disease. In some cases it can become permanently distorting and disfiguring. An additional ingredient contained within many skin whitening products was found to be mercury, a chemical known to cause skin blemishes, kidney and brain damage.

POISONOUS CREAM: Above is an example of a ‘skin-lightening’ cream that contains poisonous levels of mercury. (nyc.gov)

The following figure illustrates skin damage caused by skin whitening cream on a Tanzanian woman.

301 Figure 87

299 Ibid.
Figure 88
Skin Damage caused by use of skin whitening cream on Tanzanian woman.

The preoccupation and desire for a lighter/whiter skin colour is considered to be an outcome of colonisation and a colonialist mentality reinforced by the West’s penetration and capture of power and information at a global level. In an effort to describe the way in which European Americans have used whiteness to secure economic advantage, Lipsitz coined the phrase ‘possessive investment in whiteness’. This term refers to the way whiteness is a seemingly invisible currency that forces non-whites to compete for white approval. According to Goon and Craven this power dynamic is given visual representation through the purchasing by non-whites of skin whitening products.

Many people in India, a country colonised by Britain until 1947, continue to regard a paler skin colour as a marker of aristocratic heritage and class allegiance. The practice of skin whitening pervading India, Pakistan and Bangladesh suggests that while the colonialist power is no longer politically in power it continues to exert influence over attitudes towards racial superiority through consumerism and popular culture. This ideal is signposted throughout the country with modern roads lined with massive billboards advertising the skin whitening creams Fair and Lovely, and

305 Ibid.
Return to Fairness. According to Jazzmin Jiwa, a journalist for the Hindu Business Line, advertising in India is filled with images of idealised beauty using models who are fair in skin colour.

Advertisements on walls and billboards for clothes, toothpaste or drinks are filled with fair faces. This indicates that it is a fair face that can more readily market a product.

Advertisements containing images of fair skinned models reflect a national perception that fair skin denotes beauty, success and status. In an advertisement for a skin whitening cream in India, the audience is initially shown a dark-skinned woman who is distressed, being dragged away in a horse drawn cart. The next visual image presents a fair-skinned woman being admired and applauded as she enters a luxurious room. Through the use of stereotyping in advertising imagery, the belief that a fair skin is desirable is perpetuated in much of the Indian media. According to Jiwa this bias has seeped into the subconscious of Indian society. By working at the subconscious level Jiwa believes Indian responses to what constitutes ideal beauty become automatic rather than carefully thought out responses. They then operate by bestowing subtle advantages on those who are fairer skinned. In India there is a deep rooted sense that being fair is not only more beautiful but superior. This attitude was reflected by a participant of Indian heritage who commented on the importance placed on fair skin in India and her painful experience of growing up dark. In response to the question, “Is the colour of your skin important?” Gargy responded,

Gargy: Yes, the colour of my skin is very important to me and to how I look because it has been part of my growing years that I have been considered very dark and it has in a way affected my relationships … It has certainly been

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308 Ibid.
309 Ibid. p. 2.
something that has invaded the thinking life of young Indian girls and still does. If you look at Indian media you will find it is full of medicine, full of cream, full of everything that will make you look fair. There is a cream called Fair and Lovely, that will make you fair and lovely because that is what men and women want women to look like. And you will find matrimonial advertisements in India if you look at any newspaper you will find 'Wanted: fair, slim, girl as a bride'. So I think colour of skin is really very important in my cultural group and certainly it has been very important to me. It is very interesting some poets in Indian culture have talked about the fact that you are dark but you are also beautiful but in general it has always been the case that they have preferred women with the lighter skin complexion. And women have agonised and aspired to be this person who is beautiful. They call it gurie. Gurie means white or fair, so it is always the gurie women who is sought after. Hence women have sought to be this fair person.

It is clear from Gargy’s comments having dark skin caused difficulties during her early life in India and, while she has now accepted her reality, Gargy still regards having dark skin as a negative physical attribute and experience.

Interviewer: Would you like your skin colour to be lighter or darker?

Gargy: Definitely lighter, not darker thank you. I have had enough of living in the dark ages; I would like to be lighter now.

The preference for a whiter skin is reflected throughout India in a multitude of ways. Through tourist guidebooks that warn black Africans to anticipate derogatory comments in relation to their skin colour\textsuperscript{310} to the singles column in newspapers that stress the preference for fair skin as a criterion for any potential applicant. It becomes clear that skin colour in India has serious implication for an individual’s future prospects as this arbitrary criterion is applied to bestow material and emotional benefits.

Claudia believed the Chinese preference for a lighter skin colour stems from the association of dark skin colour with manual work and low status.

\textsuperscript{310} Sarah McDonald, \textit{Holy Cow, an Indian Adventure}, Random House, Australia, 2002.
Claudia: A lot of people don’t like dark skin because the farmers, the peasants will have dark skin because they need to work under the sun. Usually the girls from rich families will stay in their home all the time even after they have married they will stay in their home so they will have fair skins, so that’s why they think fair skin is good because they associate it with the rich.

The historical association of white skin colour with status is so prevalent among the Chinese of Hong Kong that skin bleaching creams have now inundated the country. Through frequent television advertising, viewers are provided with arguments for the virtues of white skin. Claudia states,

Each time on TV when there is a commercial break there will be at least one advertisement selling a skin whitening product.

Interviewer: Every commercial break?

Claudia: Yes I think so. At least in the peak time.

Commenting on the proliferation of skin whitening products among the Hong Kong community and the many ways the preference for a whiter skin is conveyed Carmen elaborates.

In Hong Kong now we have a lot of products to promote whitening your skin. Whitening mask, whitening cream, lotion or when you have a facial they will also promote the whitening of your skin … L’Oreal, Ponds Double White, Neutragena.
They are the brands. Every name you have. In Hong Kong you can find a lot of whitening products, it is easy to get. Yeah!

It appeared the chemical makeup of the product was unknown to both girls: of greater concern was the product’s effectiveness. The following comments by both girls suggest that while they have a minimal effect and duration, both girls still considered it a worthwhile undertaking.

Interviewer: Do you know if they’re dangerous these products? Do you know what’s in them to make the skin white?

Carmen: I am not sure but I think they are very effective.

Claudia: They are just colours which once you put them on your skin and you look white, but after a face wash you then look like what you’re like.

Carmen: After putting on the mask we will look white just for a few minutes and then it will turn back to normal but we still think it is effective. Yeah and still a lot of women would invest or put a lot of money to try to have some treatment, not surgery but some expensive treatment to get rid of the freckles and to whiten the skin.

The following figures are examples of advertisements prevalent in Hong Kong which promote the desirability of possessing white skin colouring.

Figure 89

Figure 90
The importance of skin colour was most poignantly illustrated by the half Ethiopian and half European participant, Hélène Telclmariam, who noted the first question asked at the time of a child’s birth in Ethiopia, was not what gender the baby is (as is customary among whites) but what skin colour it has. Experience makes it clear to people of colour that advantages are bestowed upon those whose skin colour is lighter and, as a result, the skin colour of a child becomes a highly important matter. Speaking on her experiences in Ethiopia Hélène noted,

Hélène: Ethiopian culture is quite mixed and in a family if there is one child who is darker, that child will sort of be less respected than the child that would be a lighter child and who will have maybe western features, like light hair and light eyes. And there is actually terms when a child is born that are immediately put on that child of the colour. Each child that is born is also identified by the colour. So you can have a red child which is usually a brownish colour child or you can have a black blue child which is a very dark child or you will have a white child which is usually what you’re hoping for. But there is all these terms that people use when they come to the hospital when they’ll say “So how is the child?” They won't say “he’s healthy” and all this, they’ll say “Oh he’s a red child” or “he's a white child” or “he’s a black blue child.” You know and this is an important thing that then puts you in this social acceptance.

Ethiopian women go to great lengths to prevent their skin from darkening, as blackness is associated with servitude and whiteness with power. As a consequence of an inter-racial marriage between her Ethiopian father and European mother both Hélène and her sister Rebecca were born with lighter skin colouring and, as a result, were afforded greater status than their darker-skinned cousins. Additionally, on the classification scale determining social respectability, whiter skin was the most valuable criteria. Hélène elaborates,
Hélène: In Ethiopia, women are required to be very fair. Being fair is considered a very nice feature. Many Ethiopian women will walk around with an umbrella so the sun doesn’t affect their skin. They walk around with very long sleeved clothes to prevent their skin from becoming dark. The darker you are the more you can be associated to a slave group. Because even Africans within themselves had slaves and when you’re dark you’re considered part of this slave group. So the whiter you become the more socially high in the social scale you are. So when we were born because we were from a mixed background in some ways even if we came in with our full Ethiopian cousins, because we had a white mother which made our skin colour go lighter, the skin colour was the way you were graded as in socially acceptable or not socially acceptable.

The practice of affording status and privilege according to skin colour was continued when Hélène and Rebecca emigrated from Ethiopia to Kenya at the age of eleven and eight years old. To their surprise both Hélène and Rebecca were confronted with people who, as a result of British colonisation, exhibited a sense of inferiority, self loathing and lacked pride in being African. Rebecca recalls,

In Kenya it was even worse, the skin colour issue, because they have been colonised really long. They are a British colony, and they have this complex that they are inferior to white people, so for them it’s even more of an issue I think. OK it’s an issue in Ethiopia but at least they are proud in a way of being Ethiopian. We didn’t see that in Kenya. They really feel a bit ashamed of being African so for us it was really strange to be with them, this is how we realised Ethiopians are not like all Africans. So for most Africans they feel ashamed for being black.

Hélène and her family migrated to France when she was fourteen years old. In contrast to their experience in Africa, the white Europeans (French), considered Hélène and her sister Rebecca, dark. When Hélène dated white French boys, her white friends felt compelled to remind her that the genetic potential to have dark
skinned children should be conveyed to any prospective husband very early in the relationship.

Hélène: When I grew up I remember there were a lot of girl friends who were telling me “Any guy who gets married to you has to realise that their kids might come out quite dark; you realise this?” And I said Oh I never thought that given that I had some African descent in my gene pool that it would be such an important thing to mention to the guy I was going to go out with and potentially marry that you have to realize that the child might come out totally black so don’t be surprised. And that wasn’t something I was thinking about but obviously people who were looking at me were thinking about this. So as we grew up I realised then, when you go through that puberty stage that there would be guys that would not go out with me because I was mixed. Where there would be these other guys who liked the exotic style, who went out with me because for them that wasn’t an issue. But most of the time it was because they had been exposed themselves to other cultures or because it wasn’t a criteria that was important to them. But it was something that was always in your mind to explain to the person you were going out with and eventually thinking of marrying that they had to realise their kids are not going to come out blue-eyed and blonde like they might like, you know.

Ndiitah Nghipondoka the African participant from Zambia suggested the percentages of women using skin whitening products varied from country to country.

Ndiitah: I know a lot of women in Namibia who bleach their skins to be a bit lighter

Interviewer: What percentage of the population would do that?

Ndiitah: I would say 10 to 15 per cent. Especially in Zambia it’s more prevalent than Namibia and they use really terrible stuff. Considering the climate of where
we are because the sun is really strong, God made it (dark skin colour) for a special purpose.

The experience of Emily, a Chinese participant who spent her formative years in Malaysia, reveals the preference for a lighter skin colour was prevalent during this time. Emily observed how close female relatives, who had internalised the social values, referred to the derogatory status of dark skin to her.

Emily: When I was in Malaysia we aimed to be as pale as possible or my parent’s generation definitely, or my aunties and uncles would comment on how dark I was, and I couldn’t help the way I was, because I was just born dark, because in my background somewhere I had a Burmese grandmother, so I had that passed on genetically so I was always dark and I was always the only one dark in my family … In Malaysia because I was that little bit darker for a Chinese my relatives or my grandmother would always say, “Oh look at this girl, she’s so dark” and that would be a negative.

Samah Sabawi reports Arabs are inundated with music clips and fashion magazines that commonly feature white models. Many of the TV anchor women have their skin layered with white cosmetic powder in an effort to conceal their true skin colour.

Al-Ahram notes that colour hierarchy is imprinted into the psyches of many people from the Arab, African and Asian countries. It is a product of their colonialist past which regarded the Eurocentric image of beauty and white culture to be superior. “Darkness is uncouth, unpolished, crude and common. Lighter is accordingly, more desirable, preferred, simply superior”. 311 Arabs with dark skin therefore conclude it is more desirable to be light skinned.

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The comments by Emily reveal a scale of attractiveness based on skin colour that participant comments and secondary research has shown to be evident in many societies. The scale represents a hierarchy of beauty which places fair-skinned individuals at the top and darker-skinned individuals at the bottom. Through the history of discourses associating the dark skin of the African and Indian with danger, savagery, primitiveness and intellectual inferiority, black skin has become stigmatised and undesirable, equated with poverty. The residue of this stigmatism is reflected in the internalised racism mothers impart to their daughters, aunties to their nieces, girlfriends to each other and society to its female citizens as it constantly uses multiple avenues to convey skin colour preference.312

3.2 The Buttocks

Beginning with expansion of European colonial exploration, describing the form and size of the buttocks became a means of describing and classifying the races. The more prominent, the more primitive. 313

The framework employed by European scientists during the 1800s in the study of the human body was to separate difference into racial categories. For example the ethnographic study of women by Herman Heinrich Ploss (1819-85) and Friedrich Kraus (1859-1938) which was typical for the time, determined the ideal female body by referencing classical Greek art works, and all racial physical difference was compared to this standard of physical perfection.314 Differences in body shape exhibited by other racial groups were viewed by Europeans of the day as an indication of their close proximity to the animal in the evolutionary development of humankind.

312 The search for a tanned skin colour by European women in countries like Australia does not contradict the general assertions made throughout this thesis. While skin colour may be tanned to varying degrees the predominant European physical frame and facial features are maintained.


314 Ibid. p. 221.
In the case of an African woman from the Khoi-San tribe named Saartjie (1789) her large buttocks was used as further proof by European scientists that Africans were less evolved than white people. For many Europeans, Hottentots were closer to apes than humans and this conclusion made their extermination justifiable. The value attached by the African culture to a large buttock such as Saartjie’s further highlighted the difference in female body ideals between the two cultures. In the early 1800s this young African woman was paraded and publicly exhibited as a freak for her large buttocks. She was caged like an animal and ordered to move back and forwards from her cage for the entertainment of European audiences. In 1815 she was displayed to a group of top medical scholars of the day. George Cuvier was an internationally renowned anatomist who was determined to find whether the buttocks were composed of fat or bone. He also wanted to examine her genitals. Anatomists were aware that a flap of skin hung from the pubic area of women from the Khoi San tribe, but no scientist had ever been able to determine the exact composition of this. Whilst still alive, Saartjie kept her genitals hidden with a small handkerchief, however within hours of her death she was on the Frenchman’s table having her genitals measured and assessed. Cuvier was able to determine the inner lips of her vagina were hanging 7-10 centimetres below her pubic cleft. Cuvier later wrote a paper stating this feature was further evidence supporting the idea that, along

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Saartjie, African woman from the Khoi-San tribe, 1789.
with the Australian Aborigines, Hottentots belonged to a society that was closer to animals than to humans.  

The prominent buttock is a genetic physical feature of a number of African groups. In the interview with the women of mixed European and Ethiopian background, Hélène’s and Rebecca’s attitudes towards this racial characteristic were discussed. In response to the question relating to historical perceptions of beauty Hélène and Rebecca responded,

Rebecca. Oh the African Bum. Your behind; that’s a big thing because white women have flat bottoms and African women have round bottoms. So they always have a big complex with this.

Hélène: It’s actually a feature that you show off. When you dance you move your bottom. When you dance you’re meant to actually move your bottom a lot more and in the villages if a man wants to show off that he is looking after his wife really well she will actually add more padding to her bottom so she has these cushions that she will add to her bottom so that her bottom will really stick out really nicely.

Rebecca: Yeah. In the north of Kenya they even put bags of sand on their bottoms so it really looks bigger.

Hélène: So it's a sign of beauty.

Interviewer. Has this changed?

Hélène: In the traditional places no. But I remember now that I’m thinking, I had this friend from Kenya who was among a group of westerners and her bottom was a big issue for her. She was working really hard and doing a lot of just

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bottom exercises so it would just flatten a bit. And her weight gain was always on that part because your body naturally grows bigger around your waistline and your bottom, so she was very conscious of what she was eating because she didn’t want to emphasise that side that really made her look African and she really wanted to conform so well. I remember every day I was living with her she would really do a lot of bottom exercises that you would see being done in a gym specifically doing bottoms and abbs. So she would try to erase that natural feature that I know I have inherited, unfortunately in some ways, because that’s where I put on the weight a lot more. So it is an issue in the sense that Western clothes are not made for that feature so your bottom always stands out. You can be wearing the same kind of clothes as a Western woman but your bottom will show a lot more than this woman. So you will have to think I will have to enlarge it here or get a larger size so my bottom doesn’t stand out as much. I am always self-conscious about this…

When asked about the ideal in Africa, Anisa, the half Kenyan and half Iranian participant stated,

The features that I know of which were desirable in previous centuries in Africa was your bottom, a big bottom is desirable. I don’t know that much about my tribe in Africa which is the Kauai tribe, I don’t know what the exact features are but I know in Kenya for some of them it’s their neck, for some of them it’s their ears, and lips and big bottoms. 317

Classifying the form and size of the buttocks as a means of describing the races following European expansion and colonial exploration, has had an impact on participants’ attitudes towards their own bodies. The imposition of European aesthetics has in many cases reshaped traditional notions of beauty. This has led to

enormous pressure on women whose bodies do not conform to the European shape to dedicate time and effort into modifying a genetic predisposition.

**THE FACE**

3.3. The Nose

We are presented everywhere with images of perfect female beauty - at the drug store cosmetics display, the supermarket magazine counter, on television. These images remind us constantly that we fail to measure up. Whose nose is the right shape, after all, whose hips are not too wide - or too narrow? 318

Noses are a distinct racial marker. The surgical operation known as rhinoplasty has become an important development in facilitating individuals who wish to change racial characteristics in conformity with European ideals. The history of rhinoplasty or nose reconstruction can be traced as far back as 1000BC to India where rhinoplasty was performed on individuals who had had their noses removed as a form of punishment. 319 It wasn’t until the mid 20th century that rhinoplasty’s popularity increased and it was employed as a cosmetic procedure. 320

Human beings’ physical appearances are charged with meaning, the most significant associations being who and who are not within the culturally defined parameters of acceptability. By comparing the noses of non-Europeans in relation to this standard those deemed acceptable can be determined. The nose that is regarded as too small, flat or large in relation to this ideal has a value judgement assigned to it. For example the flat nose of many African people has associations with ‘primitiveness’. The large Jewish nose has historically been associated with untrustworthiness and dishonesty. The small flat nose has historical associations with syphilis and wayward sexual behaviour. 321 The value judgements and visual coding associated with this feature explains the demand for its reshaping.

In comparison to European design, the Asian nose is regarded as being small, flat and with a recessed nose bridge. Countries like Korea, China, Philippines, Vietnam

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and Japan where there now exists a strong demand for rhinoplasty procedures, can trace the change in nose shape preferences to Western influences in their countries. In 1963 a Singaporean surgeon Mr Khoo Boo Chai who had developed the modern double eyelid modification commented,

Our eastern sisters put on Western apparel, use Western make-up, see Western movies and read Western literature. Now days, there even exists a demand for the face … to be westernised. 322

By using the European nose as the standard by which every other people’s racial characteristics are judged the value people place on their own racial uniqueness is undermined. By using the European as the norm, those whose physical features depart from this too widely are judged ugly.

A long and narrow nose is often a distinguishing racial characteristic of Iranian people.

Iranian woman tend to dislike this racial feature, resulting in an estimated 35,000 rhinoplasty procedures (nose remodelling operations) a year. 323 Scott Peterson suggests many Iranian women wish to sacrifice this racial signifier for a smaller model in keeping with the Western ideal. The remodelling of Iranian women’s noses has been escalating in recent years and, according to Peterson, the situation has reached the point of obsession. Peterson cites the recent access to the West as a significant political factor in this phenomenon. 324

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322 Ibid. p. 108.
324 Ibid.
Based on research by Angela Aujla into the globalisation of the Western female body ideal, one woman of Arabic ancestry described how she and her sister would sleep every night with their noses pressed up against the pillow, in an attempt to reshape their Arab noses to a more Western model. This experience she later found was common among many of her Arab friends. The desire by many Arabic women for a ‘western nose’ has resulted in an increased demand for remodelling.

Dr. Nabil Fuleihan, a facial plastic surgeon and professor, who also leads the ear, nose and throat medicine and head and neck surgery at the American University Hospital in Beirut, confirms that Lebanese people have a high tendency to undergo plastic surgery. Cherine Fahd, an Australian artist of Lebanese origin, was so concerned about the Lebanese obsession with the ‘Arab nose’ that she embarked on a major art work to raise consciousness and foster public debate. Fahd made over 100 plaster moulds on noses of Lebanese women and these were exhibited in Beirut and Sydney.

Speaking about the motivation for the art work Fahd stated,

The nose project started out as a way of examining identity. I was shocked by the number of people who have had nose jobs here. I think it’s a shame because it’s a denial of who you are.

Fahd believes rhinoplasty in Lebanon is a fashion statement with more disturbing implications. When sourcing participants from whom to cast for her project, she found it difficult to locate a Lebanese woman who had not undergone rhinoplasty surgery. Her exhibition aimed to heighten awareness and challenge this negative

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perception. While reasserting the inherent beauty of the Arab nose, Fahd draws attention to the global nature of the European female beauty ideal and the way it can undermine the traditional ideals of other races.

The Lebanese nose is a distinctive feature that should be shown off rather than shorn off the face. The ideal nose for me is large. In fact, the bigger the nose, the better. This is not just the case with the Lebanese in Lebanon. I see it with the Lebanese population all over the world: In Sydney or the States too. You have to ask yourself, “Why?” The answer is very simple. There’s a certain ideal of what constitutes a beautiful woman, and having a large nose doesn’t conform to the standard of beauty that we see in magazines. So people want to change to something more European.328

The ‘Jewish nose’ elicits similar reactions to the Lebanese and Persian nose. Historically the Jewish nose has been victim to a racial aesthetic prejudice. In Western scientific literature the Jewish nose was used to describe a physical deformity. As recently as 1850 Robert Knox, a prominent anti Semitic anthropologist, described the facial features of the Jew as including,

A large, massive, club shaped, hook nose, three to four times larger than suits the face …Thus it is that the Jewish face never can be, and never is, perfectly beautiful.329

Both males and females of Jewish heritage have been seeking the services of plastic surgeons to modify this identifying feature since the 1800s. In Berlin during the late 1800s, Jews sought out the services of Dr Jacques Joseph a pioneer of the modern rhinoplasty procedure. In the United States during the 1970s, the desire for invisibility resulted in numerous suburban Jews having surgery for designer noses prior to their Bar Mitzvahs, and throughout the United States the popularity of the procedure among Jews remains strong.330 An indication that the Jewish nose is currently viewed as deviant is illustrated by the publication of a book on plastic surgery in 1996 which described the ‘correction’ of the Jewish nose as ‘necessitating’ a classic rhinoplasty.331 The perpetuation of this aesthetic prejudice is the result of a longstanding racial prejudice and has led many Jews to seek out the services of a plastic surgeon in order to achieve social anonymity.

328 Ibid.
Beth Preminger, from the Weill Medical College of Cornell University, suggests this practice raises one aspect of a broader debate that questions the ethics of an industry that profits from altering distinguishing ethnic and racial features. In complying with patients’ wishes to alter racial features the physician becomes an accessory (unwitting or not) in the perpetuation of racial, social and aesthetic prejudices.  

The wide flat nose of many Africans has also been regarded as needing redesign. According to Gilman, African American clients in the 1960s through to the 1990s regarded the base of their nose as being excessively wide, particularly in comparison to the rest of their face. They regarded their nose as wide and flat, having flared nostrils and a fatty nose tip. Initially the motivation for change was to look less Negroid in order to avail themselves of the privileges made available to those deemed desirable.

The stigma of the nose felt by non-Caucasians around the world is indicated by the comments of participants below. Feedback from the informants revealed a preoccupation among many non-Caucasian women with their noses. Emily Tan, a woman of Chinese heritage now living in Australia suggests she has always desired a nose shape which was more European in style.

Emily: I always wanted sharper features, like a sharper nose.

Emily’s characteristically Asian nose could be described as flatter and broader in comparison to the Caucasian nose which protrudes and is longer, pointy and narrow. As a child, Emily’s heightened desire for a Caucasian nose shape resulted in her

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attempting to reshape it by attaching a peg to the end of her nose. This practice was also employed by Aimi Oyagi, the woman of Japanese ethnicity who tried the same approach following a comment by her father.

Aimi: When I was young my father told me if you pinch your nose your nose will get longer. So I tried it every night, but it didn’t work. I tried to pinch my nose with a clothes peg, for eight hours every night for one month. My father found out what I was doing and explained he was only joking. He explained it’s not good for your nose so you should stop it, so I did.

During the course of our discussion two Iranian women were invited to respond to an article which discusses the increase in rhinoplasty procedures carried out in Iran and were questioned about the ethics of removing this racial characteristic (Appendix 4). Both women felt ulterior motives were involved for the journalist to write such an article. The women objected to the narrow sample of the investigation from which conclusions were drawn. They saw the article as possibly motivated by an anti Islamic agenda. Both participants were unwilling or unable to view the popularity of rhinoplasty in Iran as part of a much larger phenomenon. Instead they insisted on responding to the article from a personal/ individual perspective. At this point during the discussion, one participant admitted to undergoing a rhinoplasty procedure but rejected any notion of it being motivated by the desire to conform to a more European design. Faranuk rejected the role of European aesthetics in influencing her current aesthetics of beauty regarding beauty ideals.
Let me tell you why I feel that, because I did have a nose job. I didn’t do it in Iran I did it in Australia. I didn’t do it for any racial reasons. It was a self improvement thing. It was interesting because it was something I thought I needed to improve ... I suppose it was the package, that this person is presentable. I was married before and I had never thought of doing it before then. It was after I got married that it was suggested to me by Iranian in-laws that I needed to do it. It made me think maybe I should! This is a bit silly really because it showed my lack of confidence which I probably still carry but that was the reason not because of me wanting to look different in terms of racial or cultural ... It was about trying to improve my self esteem I guess? So there are always different angles to why people do these things.

Faranuk’s observations suggest pressure to conform came from close family members or close family friends. This comment is consistent with Farzaneh’s experience. She observed that the pressure from people within the Persian community to meet the socially determined ideal of beauty was extremely high.

I think one thing that happens is that Persians are quite judgemental in a way and it’s mostly on your physical features and I often get comments on how I should get a nose job and it’s usually from my mother. See the nose? I think more than the Persians wanting to conform to (this is my opinion again) an Anglo body image, it’s more because Persians are very harsh on how people look and they judge on that generally. They judge on how you look and what you’re wearing and so it’s more of an inner thing.

Farzaneh suggests the success in changing what are normally regarded as ugly bodies into more attractive models is evidence of plastic surgery’s success. Commenting on the probability of Persians undergoing rhinoplasty Farzaneh suggested the rates would differ depending on specific countries and their levels of affluence.
For me it was my mum and her relatives who have all had nose jobs plus other what evers. I guess it depends in what country you are looking at. If you are looking at Persians in Australia they are going to be different to Persians in America. When I was in America I was amazed at how many young women had operations done to their body using plastic surgery. They were all beautiful, both the men and the women very stunning. You know we have this joke that Persian men are really ugly but in America there are lots of good looking ones because they do what they can, using money to change their physical features and they look pretty good looking. So I think that the more materialistic a society is, the more you focus on making that kind of change. I mean there are the exceptions where you make that change because that’s something you need to do for yourself, I think that is great, I think that is the beauty of plastic surgery and that’s where it should be utilised.

Farzaneh’s responses to external pressure applied by relatives was used by her as a means of facilitating a resistance.

Statements like

Because everybody points it out, (the need for a nose job) it annoys me, and so I resist it …

And again Farzaneh states.

So every time one of my mum’s relatives comment on you know “there’s good plastic surgeons out here” I go UUUUMMMM!!! (and look uninterested))

The history leading up to the current desire by some non-European races for a European nose shape is tainted with the legacy of colonialism, internalised racism and the desire to belong to the perceived dominant social group.
3.4 Eyes

Cultural perceptions of beauty have been shown to change throughout time and from culture to culture. The current Western ideal in relation to eyes is large and open, almond in shape, having a double lid and long dark lashes. The importance of eye shape and colour in addition to changing aesthetics throughout various cultures was noted by a number of participants.

Persian participants suggested that the eyes were a particularly important feature in Iranian culture and in response to the question “Describe the physical features previously desired”, Elika replied,

I guess in the Persian culture I think that the eyes have always been very important, beautiful eyes are very important, even when they are wearing the veils you still see the eyes that are really important and I think they still are. That’s the one that most stands out to me, the beauty of their eyes. If a Persian girl has beautiful eyes you say “you have beautiful eyes that look like the Persian picture paintings”.

Interviewer. The big almond shaped eyes?

Yes like a bulb, slanting up and down. I think that’s always been important and still is where everybody goes wow.

The growing pressure to conform to a European appearance is most marked in the readiness of many Asian women to seek out the services of a plastic surgeon. In the realm of female body ideals, where women from the Middle East might undergo rhinoplasty, the single lidded East Asian eye is often considered by its owner to be ‘in need of correction’. The correct terminology for Asian double eyelid surgery is Asian Blepharoplasty. The operation involves a small incision in the top eyelid
where a small amount of fat is removed before the incision is resewn. It costs approximately 3,500 American dollars in the United States but only 800 to 1,200 American dollars in Korea. The widespread popularity of double eyelid surgery has spread to countries including Korea, Japan, and China. The surgery is also popular among many Asians living in the west. The surgery results in the appearance of larger rounder eyes that increase the display of eye lashes. It is estimated that 40 per cent of young Korean women undergo ‘corrective’ eye surgery.

![Figure 94](image)

Surgery to modify the palpebral folds.

As noted in section 2.3 on stereotyping, people with small eyes have been historically stereotyped as mean spirited and untrustworthy. This negative association may motivate some Asian women to alter this feature. However Lee argues the motivating factor for Asian women to undergo cosmetic surgery has been the ease of applying eye make-up on a double lid. Lee notes women who have undergone surgery consistently remarked on the ease with which they were now able to apply make-up.

After the surgery they could effectively apply eye make up as it was shown in the magazine’s ‘how to’ section and in the media in general.

As Caucasian models are traditionally used in the promotion of cosmetics the association between make-up, the double eyelid and beauty is clear. Lee suggests the promotion of the European beauty ideal through the media and popular culture creates a range of additional associated niche business interests. Lee argues the

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334 Ibid.
336 Ibid.
338 Ibid.
financial remuneration resulting from selling or producing products which assist women to approximate the ideal encourages the continued maintenance and promotion of it by those who stand to gain from their vested business interests. As the idealisation of white skin benefits the cosmetic industries which manufacture and supply the skin whitening creams, the desire of many Asian women to seek surgical solutions benefits the cosmetic surgery industry.

Lee suggests the desire for Caucasian features is not driven solely by the globalisation of Western beauty standards but is a reflection of the renegotiation of social identity through commodification. Participant responses highlight the internal struggle they endured as a result of this renegotiating process. In relation to attitudes about her own Chinese eyes Emily explains,

I guess when I was growing up I thought my eyes were really, really weird. Everyone that I knew, like the boys in my school, I'm talking about when I was about nine years old would always make fun of me, you know bring up the corner of their eyes and pretend to be Chinaman you know and so that was always highlighted as unattractive. It was only recently I guess after meeting my husband that I've found that I've really started to look at my eyes differently because he looks at them differently. He really likes my eyes the way they are so it's changed that context of things so if you're in an environment when something's looked upon as oh not so nice or not admired then you think “It mustn't be that nice,” until someone changes the idea for you.

In regards to the eyelid Emily recalled the experience of her sister whose eye shape was much thinner than her own. This led her sister during her adolescent years to go to extreme lengths to reshape her existing eyelid shape. Emily recalls,
My sister had this whole issue as well, as she was growing up about what her appearance was and she was a lot older when we got to Papua New Guinea. About 13 or 15 years old when we go there so she had already done a lot of her growing up in Malaysia and when she got to PNG she was in the minority I think she went through more than I did in terms of accepting her appearance and getting to know herself again. ...She went through this double eyelid saga. Now she was told by one of my aunties who was a beautician that if you wear this tape overnight;( it was basically sticky tape, shaped in the shape of an eyelid, you could buy basically rolls of this stuff because you had to keep applying it) you could reshape your eye shape. You would put on this sticky tape on your eyelid and you would sleep with it and you would try and spend as much time over the weekend with this sticky tape and once you took off the sticky tape it left a bit of a line, like it went away almost after an hour but you know you would go through that whole sort of rigmarole; that whole sort of bothersome thing, just to have what was for her, something very important, just to have a little bit of eyelid. Like if it was for an hour she would do it you know and that was so she could apply the makeup and I think it was particularly important for her because my sister had even smaller eyes than I did. Like, my sister looks very Japanese compared to me, she has very, very pale skin. Like her eyes, like my eyes are slanty and they go up, her eyelids come down even more. They’re just like two puffs with a slit if you can imagine that, so I think she noticed her eyes more than anyone else did and it was really important for her to wear that sticky tape. I think she did that for a long time. I think she persisted for a year. So in the end she threw them out because it wasn’t working. She knew that the next step was surgery and she wasn’t willing to go that way. She learnt to live with her eyes.

The opening of Japan to the Western world in 1868 by Commodore Perry provided the Japanese with a window into Western culture and fashions. This exposure stimulated a vibrant interest into all things occidental which became popular among the people.
It was the Japanese surgeon K. Mikamo who in 1896 introduced a non-incision eyelid technique. This was followed by a new procedure known as the ‘three-stitch technique’ where upper eyelids were sewn six to eight millimetres above the eyelash with silk thread, creating a scar line that produced a fold. This later work laid the foundation for Blepharoplasty surgery that became a standard practice for the next fifty years.\footnote{Todd S. Inoue, ‘Roundabout Looks, Metroactive News and Issues, Asian Eyes’, June 27-July \url{http://www.metroactive.com/papers/metro/06.27.96/asian-eyes-9626.html}. Accessed 28/05/2003.}

The popularity of the double eye lid surgery in Japan was commented on by Japanese participant Aimi Oygi. In response to the question, “Do you know women who have changed their physical features or appearance in one way or another?” Aimi responded,

Yes, my friend made her eyes double edged eye lid by a surgical operation and in Japanese girls it is usual to use sticky tape on eyelids to make the double edged eyelid because it doesn’t involve an operation, it is easy to do that.

Interviewer: And what do you think of your friend’s surgical operation?

Ah, it’s not good, I liked her original face so I don’t like it, but her emotions; she is so happy, but I don’t like it.

A number of participants also noted eye colour was an important feature. The usually brown eyed participants expressed an appreciation for a lighter blue or green eye colour. Emily noted,

I wouldn’t like my eye shape to be different but sometimes I think I would love to experiment with the colour of my eyes. Like I’d just love to have green eyes. I like that look where you have light eyes and dark hair. I don’t know if it’s a
magazines thing or whether it’s because I've been around people with lighter eyes and I'd just like to see what I'd look like with lighter eyes. I think ‘Gee, brown is so dull’ and I think with blue eyes or coloured eyes you have extra light in your eyes so I think, that's just me I think.

This attitude wasn’t unique to Emily. A similar desire for eye colour changes was expressed by Hélène who noted Ethiopians will change their eye colour with contacts if given the opportunity. Coloured contacts have been one method of acquiring this feature.

Hélène: The ones which can really afford it; if they can change their eye colour with all these new things they will do that to look more Western with the contact lenses.

The participant Leva Azadi of Iranian heritage admired blue eye colouring when contrasted with darker features such as black hair. Leva had witnessed many Iranian women avail themselves of coloured lenses stating,

Leva: You see a lot of Iranian girls …going for the coloured contacts.

Additionally eyebrow shape was seen to be an important feature denoting beauty according to shape. In the following comments, Hélène recalls the traditional aesthetic of the Ethiopians that involved a large mono brow that extended across the front of women’s foreheads.
And another thing, which is an important feature, is having your eyebrows touching each other. The eyebrows touching is a big thing. We pluck it because both of us, we have it, and we feel it makes you look a bit harder. But for an Ethiopian woman it’s a sign of beauty, which she keeps and is very proud of. And I think some women who don’t have it naturally will actually emphasise it with a pen or something to make it meet up and so when you look back at the old traditional drawings you will always see the beautiful women and the one which is not so beautiful where there is a bit of a comparison to the beautiful one you can see her eyebrows obviously are touching. But with this arch shape you know.

Chinese Malay Emily Tan comments that her eyebrows were one part of her appearance that she would love to change. Emily explains,

I wouldn’t like to change any part of my face except my eyebrows. I’ve always had a thing about my eyebrows. See my father has these very typical Chinese eyebrows which go up in one corner and unfortunately one of my eyebrows has done that thing. I mean if you want to know what I’m talking about rent an old kung fu movie and have a look at what they do to their eyebrows. They brush it up OK it just goes in a straight line from the bridge of your nose up into the corner and flick up. It’s very unattractive, very unattractive. I have as a result plucked that hair so it has left me with sort of one and a half eyebrows. So I would really love, like I’d never tattoo my eyebrows (which is what my aunties do). Like they completely pluck their eyebrows and they tattoo these two lines. I don’t know if they realise because it looks really fake because it’s these two blue lines and I don’t know anyone with blue hair. Anyway we don’t dare to tell them anything so my eyebrows are something I would like to change in the future.

The globalisation of Western beauty standards has allowed the commercial interests of medicine and cosmetic industries to capitalise on the body dissatisfaction engendered in non-European women around the world. The historical association
and stereotyping of the small eye shape with untrustworthiness and miserliness and the use of European models in media and popular culture representing female beauty ideals explain to some extent the widespread popularity and growth of the Asian blepharoplasty operation over recent years. The popularity and promotion of blue and green coloured contact lenses to non-Caucasian women may facilitate proximity to a non-Caucasian appearance. However an outlook that regards a distinct ethnic feature as a handicap, something in need of redesign, demonstrates the institutionalised racism and colonialist mentality impacting on every detail of physical appearance.

3.5. Hair

Because of colonisation in Africa a lot of these Western ideas of beauty have changed and have made Africans change. And also movies and magazines; when you go into the African home of a girl, the girl’s bedroom walls are covered in the same way it is in a teenage room, with all these posters of all these beautiful blonde actresses and things, so becoming fair also in your hair colour has changed. There are a lot more girls that are really trying to do something with the colour of their hair.

Hélène

Hair features as another physical characteristic of increasing prominence among women concerned with status and female beauty ideals. According to the participant comments supported by secondary research the colour and texture of hair is regarded as extremely important to many non-Caucasian women around the world. According to Joanna Pitman, author of ‘On Blondes’340 the desirability of blonde hair colour has been incorporated into Western mythology since the ancient Greek goddess of beauty, Aphrodite, was portrayed in painted statues as a blonde. The dark-haired women of Rome bought wigs made from the blonde hair of Germanic tribes with whom their civilisation came into contact. The women of the classical era went to extraordinary lengths to emulate the blonde ideal by using powdered silver, saffron and even pigeon dung to bleach their hair.

In contemporary times the bleaching of hair is commonly practised among women around the world. Approximately one in three women in the United States and Europe have blonde hair colouring while statistically less than one in twenty have naturally blonde coloured hair.

In countries where natural blondes are rare such as Russia, Argentina, Brazil, and Japan more and more women are colouring their hair blonde. Historically blonde hair is a characteristic of the peoples of Northern Europe. However it is difficult to determine the exact percentage of people in this region who are blonde because of the large percentage of people dyeing their hair. Sweden has the highest percentage of both males and female who use hydrogen peroxide and other chemicals to bleach their natural hair colour blonde. Genetically accompanying a blonde hair colour are blue, green and light brown eye colouring and a pale skin tone. While blonde hair is a prominent feature of this region it does naturally exist among a small number of dark-skinned populations in North Africa, the Middle East, and a few Pacific and Australian Aboriginal communities. In countries such as Mexico and Colombia the percentage of natural blondes is about one per cent, among Sub-Saharan Africans and East Asians, the distribution is only about one in one thousand, and is often associated with albinism.

The preference for blonde hair colouring was evident in a number of participant comments. Speaking from her experience Emily Tan comments,
I have changed my hair. I’ve dyed it several colours, mainly lightening. I’ve got almost to the blond but not quite there because Asians don’t have blonde hair, but I’ve gotten as close as possible to it and that started in grade twelve. I just went to the hairdressers and said “what’s the lightest I can get away with?” She went for it and I went home with this almost blonde hair and my mother looked at me and went “Oh, I don’t know any Chinese girls with blonde hair!” And then when I went to Uni I decided I don’t want that fake look any more, sort of something I can get away with. I have friends who are mixed Chinese and Australian and I’ve always loved that look. They have dark hair but not exactly black and there is that hint of light brown in it, so I’ve dyed my hair in the past that colour. The only problem is my hair tends to go red, rather than towards the blondes so they have to bleach it and recolour it. It’s quite a long process and it takes about four hours! Anything for beauty!

Speaking on their experience of Ethiopia, and African women in general, Hélène and Rebecca noted,

Rebecca. There are a lot more girls that are really trying to do something with the colour of their hair.

Hélène: Yeah they put highlights or things like this. Like they would never really have this natural highlights but any way they put this blonde highlights to look more Western. Joanna Pitman in her book *On Blondes* 344 reaffirms this point when she quotes a comment by a 20 year old blonde Japanese woman reported on the front page of

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*International Herald* who states “I want to look more American … It’s a form of rebellion, rejecting my Japaneseness in order to look more Western, to look better, maybe more like a film star”. Pitman suggests the numerous billboards and fashion magazines featuring idealised images of blonde European women in Japan give the product they endorse an additional appeal. It’s as if by association the product mysteriously acquires some kind of magical Western superiority she suggests.\(^{345}\) Pitman also notes a similar plethora of blonde haired beauties featured in public arenas in China and Brazil. So disproportionate were the number of blonde models on the front cover of fashion magazines in Brazil that the *New York Times* noted a stranger might “mistake this racial rainbow of a country for a Nordic outpost … Slender blondes smile from the covers and white faces dominate all but the sports glossies”.\(^{346}\) Pitman notes the large number of images of idealised blondes of European heritage contradicts the racial mix of Brazil which registers only 40 per cent of the population as white. This group however is the richest and most powerful group in the country.\(^{347}\)

The popularity of colouring one’s hair blonde was also noted by Samah Sabaw who recognised numerous anchor women throughout the Arab world would colour their hair blonde in an attempt to emulate a European appearance.\(^{348}\) The editor of Egypt’s Daily newspaper, *Al-Ahram* noted,

… an increasing number of well heeled Egyptian women are desperately resorting to skin lightening creams, light tinted contact lenses and hair bleaching dyes in an often farcical attempt to attain the golden-locked look. The whitening of Egypt has become a lucrative industry.\(^{349}\)

Two African interviewees found it ironic that braiding had become popular in the West as its associations with village life and backwardness among many Africans had diminished its appeal and desirability.

Rebecca. And it’s funny how Westerners like to braid their hair in an African thing. Well Africans don’t like that anymore because it makes you look like you’re

\(^{345}\) Ibid.
\(^{346}\) Ibid.
\(^{347}\) Ibid.
\(^{349}\) *Al-Ahram*. 14/08/2002, issue 598.
from the village you know? So that if you’re educated you will never braid your hair you’ll have it just straight.

Hélène: The more educated you are the less you will get your hair braided. It’s more a village style, which is funny now so many Westerners want to have their hair braided. Where for Africans it’s like “Why do you want to have your hair braided? Do you want to look like a village girl? “If you want to look like an advanced and educated woman, you gotta have your hair looking nice and straight.

Hair texture also seems to be a matter of concern. Hélène’s previous statement regarding the association of straight hair with being educated suggests the motivation behind the extraordinary efforts African women go through to straighten their hair.

Hélène: You know hair is a big thing for the African. African hair is always the big trouble for African women. And again because we’re mixed, for a lot of the African women around us they would say “you have the hair I’ve been dreaming about all my life, and at least you don’t have to spend all these hours putting product, straightening your hair”, because our hair was naturally straighter than African hair. So hair is a big thing. Having your hair straightened is always a job; like all our Ethiopian friends around would spend literally the whole day straightening their hair. A lot of Ethiopian women actually go every week to the hairdresser; they don’t wash their hair or do anything to their hair in their house. They will spend the whole day, straightening it with all this product at the hairdresser and it’s an African hairdresser so it’s not as expensive as a Western hairdresser but it’s a normal thing when you’re a woman who goes to work, that half of your pay will go into your hair and you will spend every week, at least a Saturday or a Sunday at the hairdresser. And it’s also part of a social thing as well because the hairdresser is a place where you will meet all your girlfriends and have coffee together and there’s a whole social thing going with it, but everybody’s doing their hair during that whole day. Having their hair straightened and washed and also they’re not doing it themselves. That’s the thing about the
social level, by the time you have a bit of money somebody else is going to do that for you. You don't do it yourself. There is a kind of social status there; at least people can tell you can afford having your hairdresser doing that. But in a village the ladies will get together, again it's a big social thing, everybody will be together and fixing up their hair so women in villages you see them putting a lot of butter and a lot of oil and animal oil in their hair to make it look shiny and straighter.

Rebecca: You can even see them put a lump of butter on their head and with the sun it will just melt. So they are just sitting there with the sun just melting on their hair. It gets through their hair and becomes nice and shiny.

African women often referred to straightening their hair as an important process in keeping their hair under control. Ndiitah from Namibia commented,

Our hair we straighten. My hair is straightened. It's usually a big afro so I straighten my hair. Keep it under control! You’ve got to keep it under control. So that gets a bit too much attention.

Emily reflects on her sister’s experience when she permed her usually straight hair curly.

Emily: My sister went through this phase where she permed her hair, her perming was so severe she looked like an Asian Goldie Locks like she left her hair in coils so that was the sort of hair she had. I don’t know any Asian girls who have that
sort of hair, like we have this dead straight hair so it was this very major
perming, like she had to sit there for ten hours to get that perm or something.

Adalia Ellis, of mixed African and European heritage reflects on her desire as a
young girl for straight hair, which she regarded as more manageable and desirable.

My hair was a major issue for me, I remember my mum used to have to comb my
hair and my hair gets really kinky so it would take a long time and I remember
saying “I wish I was white, I wish I was white”, because I would see these white
kids with straight hair who would take a comb and just hit a tangle and it would
come out. It was just so fine and easy to manage and here I was with this frizzy
hair which didn’t really fit in with everyone.

Hair colour preferences among many non-European women interviewed and
supported by secondary research suggest a desire for hair colour and texture similar
to the European. This appeal may be viewed as a bi-product of colonial expansion
into Indigenous populations and the subsequent association of European power with
race and beauty. For many African Americans whose ancestors were transported to
America as slaves, their descendants have been immersed in a culture which has
institutionalised the desirability of European features. The whitening of African
Americans within the entertainment industry previously discussed illustrates the
power this ideal continues to exert. The feedback provided by non-Caucasian
participants whilst living in Australia suggests they too have experienced many of
the pressures previously discussed. The colonisation of Australia by Europeans
during the middle of the 18th century ensured a bias towards the European was
incorporated into the national aesthetic. As Australia becomes an increasingly
multicultural community, the effects of institutionalised bias towards the European
ideal impacts further on those women from non-Caucasian backgrounds. The
following section highlights the experience of some of the participants interviewed
for this research.
3.6. Participant Experiences in Australia.

From the years 1883 to 1908, Dr Dudley Sargent from the Hemenway Gymnasium at Harvard University conducted research into the exact measurement of the 'perfect woman'. After a 25 year search and measuring over 10,000 women to find one whose measurements most closely matched the proportions of the Venus de Milo, Dr Sargent named the Australian swimmer and vaudeville performer Annette Kellermann, the ‘Perfect Woman’.

Kellermann, in the early 20th century, had become one of the highest paid vaudeville stars in Hollywood and her life was immortalised in the 1950s Esther Williams feature film, The Million Dollar Mermaid. Kellermann’s measurements were remarkably close to classical perfection when compared to the classical Venus de Milo, despite being a fraction taller and smaller in her overall frame. However Kellermann’s physical statistics compare very differently to today’s current ideal being much fuller figured than current fashion trends.

The statistics listed in the book which compares Annette Kellermann’s physical statistics to the Venus De Milo are reproduced in the following graph for greater clarity.

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350 Emily Gibson with Barbara Firth, The Original Million Dollar Mermaid, Allen and Unwin, 2005, p. 58.
351 ibi, p. 61.
### ANNETTE KELLERMANN  VENUS DEMILO

*(Measurements in inches)*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>ANNETTE KELLERMANN</th>
<th>VENUS DEMILO</th>
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<td>HEIGHT</td>
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<td>HIPS</td>
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<td>WRIST</td>
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352 Figure 96

*Annette Kellerman*. The Australian Athlete and entertainer.

Considered the most ‘perfect woman’.

Like the German plastic surgeon Jacques Joseph who determined the ideal female face from a drawing by the Renaissance artist, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Sergeant used the Venus de Milo as a standard to determine the exact proportions of the perfect woman. This Eurocentric reference point situated the Australian of European heritage, Annette Kellerman, at least in the right racial grouping in which to qualify. Australians from a non-Caucasian heritage would find meeting this criterion more challenging.

Non-Caucasian participants now living in Australia suggested large cities with significant migrant populations provided an environment where individuals could blend in and feel comfortable. While individual participants had experienced racist behaviour from others, these incidents appeared to be small in number. Because of the low rate of overt racism experienced by participants in Australia some participants’ lowered their defences. However when they did encounter overt racism,

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352 Ibid. p. 58.
they found themselves emotionally vulnerable. Additionally, participant feedback suggests incidents of racism were felt to be geographically linked, with country areas believed to be less tolerant than major cities.

The lack of racial diversity in rural areas led many participants to feel conspicuous in public venues. This was highlighted by Emily who elaborated on her experience while living in a country town in central west New South Wales, Australia.

Although recently having moved to Dubbo from Sydney, a smaller country town in Australia where the majority of people are of a Caucasian background, I found that the issue of being different has sort of been brought up or has emerged again. When I first arrived here I remember going to the Shopping Mall and stepping out of the car. I was walking towards the shops and everyone was turning and looking at me and I thought there was something on my face. I thought “Ah I’d better check in the mirror.” I stopped at the shop front and thought “Oh I forgot! I’m Asian. I’m Asian in appearance!” That must be why everyone is looking at me but I completely forgot that I was of a different appearance. To me I think I look just like you and you are blonde with blue eyes and white skin but I don’t think of it that way so having just moved to a small country town has sort of brought those feelings about like “Oooh you’re different”.

A number of women commented that racism had not been a significant issue for them in Australia. This was qualified by identifying the cities as areas which were more accepting of diversity such as Sydney and country towns such as Byron Bay, where the volume of backpackers from around the world allowed women from non-Caucasian backgrounds to blend in. Working and living in the country was an unpleasant experience for Farzaneh. While living in a remote rural town in central New South Wales, Farzaneh felt her physical appearance marked her as different from the Caucasian majority. This led to feelings of alienation and discomfort.
In response to the question, “So how conscious are you of looking different from the other cultural groups in Australia?” Farzaneh replied, 

For me it depends on where I live and work. For example if I live in Sydney and happen to work in Bankstown because the majority of the population are from Arabic speaking backgrounds they have similar features, so I don’t feel that different, but when I lived in country NSW I felt I was always stared at and stood out. I felt really uncomfortable probably for the majority of the time I was there because even though it was supposed to be multicultural, there weren’t many people who looked like me or had dark features and it was pointed out to me quite frequently. So it depends on where I live. And even now when we travel and we stop at a small country town, you get the stares and the looks and you notice it. The perfect example was when we stopped at Tamworth when we drove down to Melbourne and we stopped at all these country towns but when you’re in Sydney you kind of blend in.

Anisa, the half Kenyan and half Iranian, observed more positive experiences.

When I was younger I lived in a small country town in Australia and I was the only kind of darker kid in the school and I was the only person with my type of frizzy hair so I didn’t feel um, like, people didn’t make fun of me or anything like that, but they would come up and touch my hair and go “WOW” and ask does it get wet? What does it look like and this, that and the other. I guess from the beginning I knew I looked different to the majority of the kids in the school that I went to, and as I grew older, through my teen years, I started to become very conscious about the colour of my skin. I know I’m not really dark but in the
setting I was in, the kids were all white, so I was the darkest kid in the class. So I was conscious of it in my teen years and I would apply lighter makeup on to feel like fitting in. But again no one ever made fun of me or anything like that.

Hélène, the half Ethiopian and half French participant believes Australia has been very accepting of racial difference.

I’ve actually been very fortunate since I’ve been in Australia because I’ve always been in areas where there has been quite a lot of multiculturalism. So I haven’t felt conscious, and it’s interesting because when I was in Europe I was a lot more self conscious, because people made it more noticeable in the remarks they made, which I have never had in Australia. Except once when I was in a bakery and I was so taken aback that I didn’t have the response which I usually had when I was in Europe. I was so hurt because I was so unprepared; it took me a long time to get over it because I was so unprepared. Whereas in Europe I was so prepared to having some snide comment from somebody I don’t know who walks by; I had this prepared response all the time, but here in Australia I’ve never had this, except this one experience and it was a lot more hurtful. But I’ve never felt it in Sydney or here (Byron Bay) because there’s a lot of islanders. A lot of people usually think I’m from the Islands and in some ways there is an acceptance of people from the islands here.

It may be argued Australia is evolving towards a more tolerant society as it emerges from a colonial past that embraced a racist ideology. However this is not supported by a recent study carried out by Kevin Dunn at The Australian National University in 2003. Dunn questioned 5056 NSW and Queensland residents by phone to ask questions related to experiences of racism as well as to identify the distribution of intolerant attitudes within Australia. While identifying a lack of research in this area Dunn’s findings suggest racism in Australia is extensive with anti Muslim sentiment running high. Intolerance towards Asians, Aboriginal and Jewish Australians was

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also identified. Dunn’s research suggested less than half those surveyed recognised the cultural privileges that come with being part of the dominant culture and such attitudes were most evident in those who were older in age, those with no tertiary education, those who spoke only English, those born in Australia and males. Dunn’s research suggests 15 per cent of people have experienced racism in workplaces and other educational/institutional type settings with one quarter of Australians reporting that they experience racism of an everyday nature. This was higher among Indigenous Australians, those born overseas, those speaking a language other than English (excluding UK and NZ) and males. Dunn asserts the prevalence of racism within Australia manifests itself differently everywhere.

This point is supported by the participant comments who indicated racist responses based on appearance were more likely to be experienced in rural areas as opposed to large metropolitan centres where large migrant communities are situated. Participant responses also indicated racist sentiments were more likely to be conveyed underhandedly as opposed to a blatant aggressive attack. For example participants recalled being overlooked in a shop queue in preference to white customers who had subsequently arrived or of being ignored in favour of whites during a group conversation. Non-white participants were more likely to report encountering this type of underhanded expression of racist sentiment than a verbal or physical assault. The subtleness of their alien status continues to be conveyed via a variety of means. The next section will illustrate other ways the often subtle message of their otherness is conveyed.

3.7. Cultural Bias in Product Design

For, in breaking into my own body of speech, opening up the gaps and listening to the silences in my own inheritance, I perhaps learn to tread lightly among the limits of where I am speaking from. I begin to comprehend that where there are limits there also exists other voices, bodies, worlds, on the other side, beyond my particular boundaries. In the pursuit of my desire to cross such frontiers I am paradoxically forced to face my confines, together with the excess that seeks to sustain the dialogues across them. Transported some way into this border country, I look into a potentially further space: the possibility of another place, another world, another future.

354 Ibid.
355 Ibid.
356 Ibid.
357 Ibid.
Participants repeatedly recalled their personal experiences with cultural bias in product manufacturing, design and promotion. This is consistent with the capitalist, consumer driven market economy informing Australian society. Individuals from a number of different cultural groupings recounted their experiences when encountering cultural bias in the manufacturing and design of consumer fashion items. For example a Chinese Malay participant commented on the difficulties in applying eye make-up on a single lidded Asian eye.

I think if there were any looks that I would have liked to have when I was growing up I would have to say probably bigger eyes especially in terms of having eyelids, because as you're growing up you start experimenting with makeup at about say 13 or 12 years old and whenever I would wear eye makeup it would just disappear because there is no eyelid to put it on.

Directions in girls magazines illustrating the application of makeup to the eye are most often demonstrated using a Caucasian model with a double eyelid.

359 Figure 97
How to Apply Make-up Illustration.

359 Girlfriend, June, 2002.
Body Parts

Additionally Emily, the Asian participant of Chinese extraction, found the design of fashion sunglasses racially biased in the way they are devised to sit on a European nose bridge and facial bone structure. Comments by Emily reveal the frustration at not being able to locate fashion sunglasses and finding the frames sat on her cheeks before they rested on the bridge of her nose.

Like for example you go into any sunglass shop everything that you try on for an Asian who has a flatter bridge across the nose, you'll find that nothing ever fits. You want the most fashionable sunglasses that are advertised in the magazines but when I go to try the actual glasses on I find they touch my cheeks before they touch my nose bridge. It was only recently that I could find a pair of sunglasses that could actually sit on my nose and not my cheeks.

The Aboriginal participant Lyn Riley Mundine remembers shopping with a friend for nylon stockings (See figures 98 and 99). Labelled on the packet was the description ‘Skin Colour.’ Her friend highlighted the inappropriateness of this description as it was not representative of their skin colouring.

360 [www.the-clothes-line.co.uk/productdetail.asp](http://www.the-clothes-line.co.uk/productdetail.asp) Accessed 06/08/05.
I remember though one of the problems we did have was we used to try and go and get stockings or foundation and you’d go to the shops and on them would be written ‘skin colour.’ And you’d look at them and think “How could they say that’s skin colour when it’s not your skin colour”. I think that was one of the ways in which things were very racist in terms of the way that things were advertised because it was a particular cultural/race’s skin colour. I can remember a cousin of mine coming home and being really angry because she’d gone to get some stockings or something like that and she came home and she said “They’ve got skin colour on them, how can they claim that is skin colour? That’s not a bloody colour!” She said “It’s not my skin colour.” And so trying to find stockings that matched her dark skin; at one stage they had this creamy sort of colour which was “skin colour” or there was “black”. So you couldn’t get anything in between, and it was the same thing with foundation and things but now there’s a bigger range and things and they don’t have “skin colour” they have “bronze” and you know, “light brown” and “tan” and it makes a big difference but it took a long time for that change to occur and I think in fact it’s only been in the last 10 years that that’s actually occurred.

For Linda Field whose African skin colour is darker in colour than Lyn’s, finding a matching foundation makeup and stocking colour remains problematic. Linda identified the range of make-up in many Australian department stores incompatible with her dark skin colour. For example lipsticks, rouge and foundation makeup were all identified by Linda as items of make-up where the available colours were unsuited to her skin colouring or unflattering to her complexion.

I’ve gone looking in a few department stores here in Australia for makeup to suit my skin colour but they just weren’t there. And the colours that are there just don’t suit my complexion or skin colouring. The colour range in lip sticks doesn’t suit me either!
This advertisement for make-up in figure 100 illustrates the often limited range of skin colours available and those that are available are weighted towards the paler tones. It highlights the often subtle way non-Caucasians are reminded of their ‘otherness’.

The following image created by Sandy Huffaker (Figure 101) titled *White is a Flesh Coloured Bandaid* is an artist’s comment on the racial bias prevalent in product design and illustrates the way whiteness is situated as the norm by which everything else is measured. “White people create the dominant images in the world and don’t quite see that they create the world in their image.”

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362 Illustration of the often limited colour range in foundation make-up advertised in many women’s magazines.
This artwork comments on the problem many non-Caucasians experience as a result of racial bias in the manufacturing and design of many consumer products. Being beige in colour, the bandaids were designed to sit unobtrusively on white coloured skin however the standardising of products using whites as the touchstone is shown to be inadequate when it comes to this product’s use on other skin tones.

The African American informant, Linda Fields also identified the beige/tan coloured bras as a product which was racially biased towards women from Caucasian backgrounds. Beige coloured bras are usually worn by Caucasian women under transparent clothing. The purpose is to camouflage the bra by matching it to the skin colour of the wearer. However on brown skin the beige coloured bra remains conspicuous. Black bras are not an adequate alternative as they also contrast with her brown skin colour.

One of the difficulties I have experienced is finding a bra that I can wear under blouses that are sheer or slightly see through. Usually you would wear a bra that matched your skin colour so it was unnoticeable through the fabric but with my coloured skin the standard beige bra colour really stands out. The only other colour available is black and even it is not suitable.

The following figure (102) illustrates the beige colour bra that blends in with the skin coloured tones of the European but is inappropriate to Linda’s skin colour.
Dyer notes the manufacturing of the still photographic camera is yet another consumer product designed with a racial bias in its construction.\textsuperscript{366} In the development of the camera Dyer points out, the lighting made available through the automatic light meters when taking images was formulated using the white face as the benchmark. As a result the technology has come to be seen as fixed, with consumers assuming that the light meter is constructed that way because there is no other option.\textsuperscript{367} Commenting on processing images developed using white people as the benchmark Dyer explains,

\begin{quote}
All this is complicated still further by the habitual practices and uses of the apparatus. Certain exposures and lighting set ups, as well as make-ups and developing processes, have become established as normal. They are constituted that way to use the medium. Anything else becomes a departure from the norm, or even a problem. In practice such normality is white.\textsuperscript{368}
\end{quote}

An additional example of racial bias in product design is in the manufacturing and marketing of the Barbie Doll. This doll was developed by the toy manufacturer Mattel in 1959 and sold 350,000 dolls in its first year. Today Barbie is a 1.9 billion-dollar per year industry and is marketed in more than 140 countries worldwide.\textsuperscript{369}

\textsuperscript{365} http://braexperience.com/Felina.htm. Accessed 03/04/06.
\textsuperscript{367} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{368} Ibid.
Barbie’s Caucasian features included long blonde hair, prominent breasts, narrow waist and hips, blue eyes and disproportionately long narrow legs and narrow ankles. Despite this unrealistic representation of a woman, Barbie continues to represent a significant role model for millions of young girls all over the world.

Because of its global popularity and its role in conveying a female body ideal, Mattel was challenged over the dominant portrayal of one racial ideal. This challenge resulted in the introduction of a Latina and African American doll to the range. The omission of an Asian doll in the new range however, was apparent. According to Ophira Edut, the manufacturers have produced two Asian characters which belong to ‘The Friends of Barbie Cast’. However these are only promoted in a very minor way and are more expensive.

372 http://www.gla.ac.uk/.../fantasy_celts_16/barbie_01.jpg. Accessed 23/08/06
373 http://www.collecttolkien.com/images/FigMatteGaladrielDollBarbieDec2004$40.jpg. Accessed 23/08/06
374 The original design of Barbie was as a sex toy and not intended to be a ‘realistic’ or realist representation even for Europeans.
For many African Americans, Mattel’s attempt at redressing a racial bias was viewed to be inadequate. The black Barbie maintained many features of the standard doll such as the European facial features, straight hair and aspects of the Caucasian body shape. Only the skin colour changed and many African Americans regarded this as an insincere attempt at addressing an important issue. The exchange between manufacturer and critic can be interpreted as an expression of Western culture’s racial blindness. By ignoring the racial/physical variations of the African American women, such as prominent buttocks, thick curly hair, recessed nose and only recognising skin colour, Mattel denied young African American girls positive reinforcement about their own racial attractiveness.

The anglophiling of Asian features on the Japanese Barbie Doll is also apparent. Racial characteristics such as the black straight hair, the single eyelid, bone structure and nose shape have all been altered in line with a Caucasian profile.
Clothes design in Australia was highlighted by a number of participants as a problem. The design, cut and size of clothes are made with a European body shape in mind. For example Aimi identified the design of clothes such as trouser pants as being Eurocentric. Designed for Caucasian bodies which are much taller in general than many Asians the pant legs tend to be extremely long.

I think everything is big. I think Australian sizes are big, bigger than Japanese. The pants are so long for me and so big.

This problem was evident not only in Australia but in her country of origin, Japan. Advertising in women’s magazines in Japan, incorporates a sizeable number of Caucasian models to sell women’s apparel such as clothes and make-up. Many Japanese women on admiring the clothes advertised in the magazines attempt to

384 Apart from specialist shops in Chinatown areas of cities like Sydney and Melbourne.
purchase them but are disappointed when they tried them on and found the design and fit did not suit their body shape. Participants in Darling Wolf’s studies support this experience recalling the feelings of frustration and anger generated when the clothes they tried on were incompatible with their body shape.

Cheiko complained,

Westerners and Japanese have completely different (body) styles, so if I try to wear these kind of clothes, they generally don’t fit me, so I feel angry. I feel like I’m being deceived. 385

This issue was also raised by Linda Fields who found the cut of the ‘standard’ pant was incompatible with the larger thighs of her African body shape. Hélène also highlighted this as a problem for women of African heritage who found local fashion didn’t cater to the more prominent buttocks of the African women’s body shape and appeared to be Eurocentric in its overall design.

So African women who start getting dressed in Western clothes; the problem is that western clothes are not made for a big bottom so your skirt is always sort of going up at the back And it’s because the fashion is usually having a nice straight skirt. Well of course your bottom is going to show a lot more.

Hélène also identified bias in product design in the availability of prostheses. She recalls seeing numerous black Africans with white limbs when living in Africa.

The trouble with this colour bias is that it even extends to the colour of prostheses. I remember seeing many Africans with white ones and it looked so strange.

Supporting these comments is a report in *The New York Times* detailing the experience of disabled mother Ingrid Nicholls who was faced with the prospect of having her amputated leg being fitted with a white prosthesis.\textsuperscript{386} Ingrid Nicholls, 46, was told by a doctor that if she wanted a black artificial foot she would have to buy it privately, and it would cost 3,000 pounds. As a result she was offered a white one because it was cheaper.

\textsuperscript{387} Figure 113

*Ingrid Nichols*

A similar experience was identified by nearly all black and minority ethnic women who participated in a study conducted by Breast Cancer Care in the United Kingdom in 2005.\textsuperscript{388} The study was interested in exploring people’s experiences of different types of prosthesis fitting services and was keen to identify any gaps in their information and support needs. Using a qualitative approach, 38 women were recruited from across the UK. The sample reflected a broad spectrum of age, ethnic


background and stage of diagnosis. Participants identified the importance of being offered a breast prosthesis that matched their skin colour. However nearly all the black and minority ethnic women in the study reported that they had experienced difficulties in obtaining a non-white prosthesis. Whilst it was generally acknowledged by Breast Cancer Care that prosthesis manufacturers had improved their skin colour range these women still had problems obtaining them. Although one manufacturer required a colour sample to be matched with each prosthesis candidate this was not a standard procedure. For one Asian participant the prosthesis provided was pink in colour demonstrating a gross insensitivity to the client.

> The prosthesis they gave me was a pink coloured one. It’s the same as I would call a chicken breast …Then I saw these new stick-on ones from a magazine and asked the hospital for one. This is what they sent me (shows large white prosthesis). I couldn’t believe that they had done it to me again. I phoned the hospital and asked if I could have a skin coloured one. I was told to get a pair of stockings and we will dye it for you. I really am insulted. (INT37)389

The pervasive bias constructed around whiteness penetrates many aspects of consumer culture. The experience of the participants taking part in the Breast Care study demonstrates that even when the products are manufactured in line with multi racial considerations the situated norm of whiteness impedes access to their distribution and further hampers equity. From clothes design to camera technology, cosmetics and first aid products to children’s toys, non-Caucasians have their otherness reinforced.

The next chapter will examine how the creative processes can contribute in a constructive sense to the forging of a future that celebrates the racial diversity of the human species while challenging the status quo. The literature and participant contributions to this study offer a framework and impetus for an alternative set of images and representations. Through the process of interpretation and reflection a body of artwork was created that responds to the theoretical literature and participant responses by critiquing their experiences, making visible the many ways whiteness informs both the personal and the social. The artwork exposes the ways in which whiteness installs itself as the dominant world view and invites the viewer to consider the personal cost accompanying its preservation.

389 Ibid.
CHAPTER 4: ART PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

Chapter 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical research and conceptual underpinnings as applied to my own art practice. Dispersed throughout this discussion is a focus on the seminal work of a group of artists whose artworks relate to significant areas of interest discussed within this thesis. The principal factors informing the choice of artists were their use of the topic of race, colonisation and mediated images of beauty. These artists, like the women interviewed, have been influenced by the migratory pressures of the global diaspora; their voices formed not only by the culture of their birth but also by the geographic and cultural encounters with their new homeland. Much of the artwork discussed is concerned with issues surrounding identity and the artists’ connection with history, memory and colonisation as well as the politics of representation. The artists selected employ narratives that address issues associated with cross-cultural translation and questions of positionality. Also included is an overview of the individual art works I created which critique many of the issues raised throughout the research inquiry and the individual comments made by the women interviewed. Technical challenges and knowledge derived from the practical research process is also documented.

The theoretical research and artistic response has been a personal journey of exploration and discovery. Throughout my journey working with representation of race in a post-colonial environment emerged as a persistent challenge. A discussion on the nature of these challenges will now follow through an examination of artworks produced by Henry Matisse, Paul Gauguin and Picasso in addition to relevant print media examples. These works highlight issues associated with stereotyping, misrepresentation and the misreading of images of race. Following this is a discussion on the current debate surrounding the ethics of working as a white artist with images of non-whites. Determining my position in relation to the historical and philosophical debate surrounding the production of images of race is important to any future reading of my artworks.
4.2 Reading and Misreading Images of Race

The Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer suggested, when composing an image of a beautiful figure, the artist, “must take the head from some and the chest, arm, leg, hand, and foot from others”. “Negro faces are seldom beautiful”, Dürer noted, suggesting also that “their shinbones and knees” are “not so good to look upon as those of the whites”.390 Dürer, in making such statements, merely reflected the Eurocentric aesthetic of the day and restated pre-existing stereotypical notions of race. The exploration of new lands by the Europeans in the 15th century initiated four hundred years of colonial expansion that eventually resulted in much of the world coming under Western domination.391 The colonial discourse imposed stereotyped concepts on both the white and non-white populations which became encoded in both verbal and visual representations of the racial other.392 The avant garde artists of the late 19th and early 20th century operated in and against this colonial world where the rich tapestry of influences flowing from the Orient, Africa and Oceania transformed modern art. The decorative elements accompanying Islamic carpets, wall tiles and miniature paintings, Moroccan tapestries, African sculptures and oriental art and woodblock prints infused new approaches to visual representation for Modernist artists such as Picasso, Matisse and Gauguin.

Stereotyped notions relating to race and the superiority of Western/European culture were restated within the visual language of the modern era. Gauguin viewed peoples from the Orient, Africa and Oceania as being closer to nature than to culture.393 In the 1890s a search for the unspoiled life motivated Gauguin to migrate from Europe to Tahiti.394 According to Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighten, Gauguin’s journey was motivated by his desire to rediscover and liberate his ‘sexual being’ from the confining social mores imposed by Western culture on his sexual drive.395 His letters from Tahiti suggest his sexual liaisons with Tahitian women were an attempt to fulfil a metaphysical union between body and mind which he considered unobtainable with his white wife.396 The categorising of non-Western cultures as ‘primitive’ restated the

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392 Ibid. p. 179.
393 Ibid. p. 177.
395 Ibid. p. 176.
396 Ibid. p. 176.
belief in the uncontrolled sexual licentiousness of the native/primitive in opposition to the stereotyping of European culture which was cast as ‘modern’ and civilised, possessing the moral virtues of order and restraint.\textsuperscript{397} According to Antliff and Leighten the dark-skinned women of Tahiti or Africa were epitomised during this period as, “the embodiment of sensuality whose sexual energy mirrors that of the fecund forest surrounding them”\textsuperscript{398}. Picasso’s use of the angular and reductionist stylistic features associated with African art in his depiction of five prostitutes in a brothel in the painting \textit{Demoiselles of d’Avignon} linked pervading stereotypes of the day. Prostitutes, during this period, were regarded as being close to the primitive and possessing a natural proclivity towards sexual activity.\textsuperscript{399} Picasso’s combination of stylistic features drawn from African art in the depiction of European prostitutes restates pervading social attitudes in relation to stereotyped notions about race.

\begin{figure}[h]  
\centering  
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{demoiselles_of_davignon.png}  
\caption{Figure 114}  
\textit{Demoiselles of d’Avignon}  
1907, Picasso.  
\end{figure}

Similar stereotyped notions of race were also applicable in European images of Arab cultures in North Africa and the Middle East.\textsuperscript{401} Europeans were able to diminish any notion of equality by labelling the cultures as ‘Oriental’. The stereotyping of the oriental woman as passive and sensual was further illustrated through the Fauvist works of Henry Matisse. Marilyn Board, who has documented Matisse’s repeated

\textsuperscript{397} Ibid. p.176.  
\textsuperscript{398} Ibid. p. 176.  
\textsuperscript{399} Ibid. p. 177.  
\textsuperscript{401} http://www.geocities.com/picasso0408/demoizav.html. Accessed 01/02/07.  
\textsuperscript{401} Ibid.
depictions of the oriental other as the sensual, passive form of the female concubine in a harem, suggested Matisse was mirroring current attitudes that viewed women of the Orient as "representing an undiscriminating sensual paradise ..." Through his depictions of the oriental other, Matisse cast his European models in the role of an odalisque, further restating existing stereotypes and male fantasies of unending sexual pleasure.

While Modernists such as Gauguin and Matisse sought to liberate and transform Western artistic traditions from what they perceived as oppressive moral, social and aesthetic restraints they also exhibited many of the internalised stereotypical attitudes of the dominant culture they opposed.

Additional challenges are illustrated through the following image. Charles Barkley, a famous sportsman in the United States of America appeared on the front cover of Sports Illustrated. At first glance the viewer may be aware of the figure's race, large muscular physique and the appearance of shackles around his neck and wrists. Response to the visual cues contained within this image could suggest Barkley is unpredictable and a potential physical threat. This sense of threat is reinforced by

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402 Ibid.
405 Ibid. p. 180.
positioning Barkley high within the picture’s frame. From this position of height Barkley looks down upon the viewer further increasing the viewer’s sense of unease. The figure’s upright stance, lack of a clearly determinable mood or intention, mode of dress and skin colour and the prominent use of black and red in the image’s colour combine to stereotype Barkley as potentially menacing. This however was not the intention of the image.

On closer inspection the addition of text indicates the image’s intended message was to challenge the popular belief among many young African American males that excelling at sport is their only option for breaking free of the racialised restraints experienced in American society. The image also illustrates Barkley’s metaphoric liberation from these restraints by depicting him as breaking free of these oppressive chains. The prominence of the previously identified visual cues may result in some viewers misunderstanding the image’s intended message. It is only on a closer examination of the image and text that the intended message becomes clear.
The artwork of Matisse, Gauguin and Picasso illustrate the use of stereotyping absorbed from the cultural mores of their time. The *Sports Illustrated* image demonstrates the inherent potential for misreading an image’s intended message when utilising representations of race to challenge and convey attitudes and ideas. These examples demonstrate a number of problems related to working with representations of race. A significant challenge concerns the risk of restating stereotypes whilst aiming to articulate broader issues. These issues became increasingly relevant to the execution of my own artworks and the endeavour to critique issues associated with race. As many of the works are a comment on stereotypes, I became increasingly aware of the risk in restating and perpetuating these typecast images. Whilst mindful of the potential to offend viewers of all races I aimed to incorporate them into the visual language so as to exploit and usurp their power. While the intention was to subvert the power of the stereotype through the artwork I recognised there remained the potential for the meaning to be misread by the viewer. The previous examples highlight the difficulties of challenging prevailing attitudes through the visual medium from a historical and contemporary context. Addressing these issues has stimulated a contemporary debate on the ethics of white artists incorporating images of the ‘other’ in their work: that is mindful of the potential to perpetuate the stereotype and misrepresentation of race. A discussion on the nature of the debate will now follow highlighting my position to the issues raised.

4.3 Bridging Ethics with Practice.

Artists alone can’t change the world. Neither can anybody else, alone. But we can choose to be part of the world that is changing. There is no reason why visual arts should not be able to reflect the social concerns of our day as naturally as novels, plays and music.  

Speaking as a white woman on the experiences of non-whites raises a critical question about the legitimacy of this approach. Similar questions have been raised in literary criticism concerning men’s right to write female characters or the rights of males to write about feminism. I argue that while a person living the experience is often in the best position to comment, it is valid for others to contribute to the resulting discourse. Males do write about feminism and male authors do write female roles.

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406 Lucy Lippard, *Trojan Horses: Activist Power and Power in Art After Modernism: rethinking Representation*  
New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984, p.344-45
Gillian Cowlishaw an Australian Ethnographic researcher stated during a presentation at the Borderpolitics of Whiteness Conference in December 2006,\(^{407}\) that while *knowledge is positioned* it is not sealed into compartments. The ethnographer she argues (or researcher I suggest) may be black or white and this will colour their work but it does not determine the value of the knowledge they produce. Speaking from an anthropological position Cowlishaw argued,

> Anthropology rejects the view that only people acculturated within the same social realm can describe it, and outsider’s accounts can compliment and enrich insider’s accounts. Of course this is fundamental to any scholarship; history assumes we can know something of other generations inhabiting other cultural worlds…\(^{408}\)

While arguing the merit of valid research is independent of race, it is not my position to ignore the sensitivities or overlook the long history of misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples perpetrated by whites. Mindful of objections regarding Indigenous representations created by whites I have endeavoured to consider these concerns. In March 2007 I met with the designated local Aboriginal community Elder and representative, Ms Irene Harrington\(^{409}\). During this meeting I was given the opportunity to present images of my work, convey its history and intention and to ascertain if the work was in any way offensive. Should Ms Harrington have found the work to be offensive I would have excluded it from future viewing. As a result of this meeting I was able to ascertain the work was not perceived by her to be offensive and should later community concerns arise Ms Harrington would be in a position to explain more comprehensively its history, aims and objectives. So deep is the mistrust among many within the Aboriginal community to the motives of whites utilising Aboriginal representations that initiatives like meeting with the local elders before the work is exhibited in conjunction with comprehensive documentation accompanying the image were found to be important considerations. Difficulties arise when work is exhibited in different localities requiring Indigenous consultation along the way.

In determining a philosophical stance I was required to weigh the various positions I encountered. One position argued that it was problematic when white people present

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\(^{407}\) Gillian Cowlishaw, Borderpolitics of Whiteness Conference, Carlton Crest Hotel, Sydney, 13-15/12/06.

\(^{408}\) Gillian Cowlishaw, Quoted from a Presentation at ‘Borderpolitics of Whiteness Conference’ in December, Carlton Crest Hotel, Sydney, 2006.

\(^{409}\) Aunty Irene Harrington is a local Bunjalung Aboriginal Elder on the Southern Cross University Council and the liaison point between the Aboriginal community, local Elders and Southern Cross University
an indigenous perspective through the creative arts. For Dr Odette Kelanda the issues of appropriation, representation, power, the politics of voice and the artist’s whiteness as a race were often unacknowledged when representations of indigenous people were created by white people. The problematics associated with white artists entering racial discourses has resulted in the belief by some that the issue can best be addressed by white people forfeiting representations of the Indigenous ‘other’. Kelanda recounts a discussion that took place at the 2001 Sydney Writers Conference among an indigenous panel who were asked about white writers writing from an indigenous perspective (i.e. Thomas Keneally in the *Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith.*) Kelanda recalls panel members felt it shouldn’t be done. She states one of the panel members, Aileen Moreton Robinson commented, “White culture still gets presented as the norm by white writers and not as the ‘other…Taking control of the stories is part of Indigenous empowerment.” Kelanda recollects all the panellists agreed aboriginal voices have to be heard telling Indigenous stories before non-Indigenous people. Kelanda suggests white writers/artists cannot divorce themselves from their colonialist past and must consider where they are located at the intersection of time and history when and if choosing to make representations of the ‘other’. To support this point Kelanda quotes the post-colonialist Trinh T Minh-ha who states one needs to acknowledge and understand not only “the specifics of the writer (or artist) as historical subject (who writes and in what context?) but also…writing itself as a practice located at the intersection of the subject and history. In this quote Trinh T Minh-ha stresses that the focus is on “material relations of power and difference within the specifics of history and location, at the same time as pursuing the constructed and situated nature of meaning and experience.”

As a result of white people’s history of misrepresentation of Indigenous people whilst occupying a position of power, refraining from Indigenous representations is seen as a way of making room for the Indigenous voice, empowering indigenous people and readdressing the past. Such efforts to address this damaging historical legacy are analogous to recent affirmative action strategies to address sexism. Just as affirmative action in the workplace addresses a history of male bias, white image makers of today, this position argues, should refrain from representations of indigenous people.

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410 Dr Odette Kelanda, , Presenter, Borderpolitics of Whiteness Conference, Carlton Crest Hotel, Sydney, 10-13/ Dec/ 2006.
411 Ibid.
412 Ibid.
413 Ibid.
This position contends image making of race cannot be divorced from its political and moral history, current social environment and contemporary power dynamics and white artists working within this realm need to consider these broader issues.

This position was in contrast to a number of non-white, non-indigenous women’s perspectives who felt being a white woman was advantageous to raising issues related to race, representation and subjectivity. The two African participants, Hélène and Rebecca stated,

Hélène: If a black person raises these issues people tend not to listen because they are seen as whinging. Or even a white person with dark skinned grandchildren are seen to have a personal agenda. But because you’re white without these things I think it has more significance.

Rebecca: It’s like a male speaking for the rights of women. I tend to listen more to them because they don’t have a vested interest.

These comments illustrate the diversity of opinion among a range of people from all races and cultural backgrounds on the debate. Determining my own position required I consider as many points of view as possible in order to forge my own path and contribution to the debate.

The position which advocated no representations of the indigenous person should be created by the white artist left me questioning the consequences of such a position as well as its practicality. Taken to its logical conclusion this argument could result in white people being ghettoised into making representations of only their respective race. This would continue the historical practice of white image makers over-representing whites and presenting their experience as the norm. The under representation of non-whites and their experience, by white image makers was identified by the participants interviewed as a significant factor in the undermining of self esteem and identity.

Alternatively should I choose to utilise non-white representations in my work I may be contributing to the injustices of the past. Mindful of the difficulties of misreading images of race previously discussed and the problems associated with removing oneself from biased societal stereotypes forging a position from these points of view proved to be an ongoing and extremely difficult dilemma.
Arguments in support of European involvement in race representation such as Gillian Cowlishaw’s argument noted earlier, regard the researcher’s race as contributing to the positioning of the research but not determining the value of the knowledge produced. Moreover, an outsider’s account may compliment and enrich an insider’s account. This understanding contributed to my position that people of any race retain a right to respectfully create representations of all races and the more people of any race creating images of the ‘other’ the better. While I respect the Indigenous ethical and cultural position and work conscientiously to avoid affront to anyone my intention is for the artwork to assist in raising consciousness regarding the biases of a Eurocentric heritage in order to create a just environment for all.

My success of working with representations of various race’s has not always been successful with some viewers misreading the ceramic figures intended message and racial heritage. However the possibility that I could more ably usurp the corresponding power structures and facilitate my dissent by incorporating non-white representation in any future works remains an important option. This approach would also contribute in some small degree to addressing the lack of non-white representations in Australian society as identified by participant interviewees as a factor which negatively impacted on their self esteem.

4.4. Bridging Theory and Practice with the Personal

Responding in relation to both theoretical and artistic research into the inherent racism in cultural productions and the impact white bias has on non-white women’s sense of identity and self esteem in Australia is more than an intellectual exercise. A poignant reminder of my white privilege was brought home to me during an encounter with an Aboriginal friend whilst living in the central western town of Dubbo, NSW in 2003. Before moving to the Northern Rivers I visited a friend who was living in the government housing division known as The Gordon Estate, to say my goodbyes. This area suffers from problems of crime, drug addiction, sexual assault, incest and violence not uncommon in many housing commission areas. These social pathologies surrounded my friend Patsy and her extended family. Patsy was an aboriginal woman from the Kamilaroi tribe who, over the years, became a close friend. Upon hearing of my impending leave Patsy responded with happiness for our family’s future prospects followed by despair at her own. Patsy longed to escape the
area in order to protect her two grandchildren who she was raising, from the drug abuse and social decay which surrounded them. Few real estate agents would lease a house to Aboriginal tenants so their ability to live in a safe neighbourhood was dependant on government authorities who controlled the allocation of houses. Her comments starkly identified the privilege and position my white skin afforded me and the difficulties non-whites, particularly Aboriginal people experience, on many levels. Her comments have weighed on me ever since. This and similar experiences have intensified my interest in white privilege.

4.5. Theoretical Framework

My visual arts practice sits within the theoretical framework of a critically analytical model. Working within such a model my art work aims to function as a form of social comment challenging cultural and social norms of imbedded whiteness.

Kincheloe and McLaren suggest a person working within a criticalist model use their work as a form of social or cultural criticism. In addition the person working within this model should accept certain basic assumptions. These include understanding that thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations which are social and historically constructed. This fact cannot be isolated from values or other forms of ideological messages. The social relations between capitalistic production and consumption cannot be separated from their relationship with concept and object and between signifier and signified. That language is fundamental to the implementation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness) and that in any society particular groups are privileged over others. While the reason for this privilege varies the oppression that characterises these societies is most powerfully repeated when the subjugated accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable. In addition Kincheloe and McLaren suggest that subjectivity and oppression is multifaceted and by focusing on one facet the likelihood of recognising its interconnectedness with many others is reduced.414

Further theoretical underpinning includes an emphasis on my experience as a woman who is concerned primarily with the experience of other women. My thesis research and artistic response which challenges the ramifications of imbedded whiteness on

the self esteem and identity of non-European women living in Australia situates my theoretical positioning within a feminist paradigm.

Having emerged from a critically analytical approach, feminist theory appeared to be concerned with articulating the role and experience of women. Lucy Lippard describes feminism as “an ideology, a value system, a revolutionary strategy, a way of life”. For Toril Moi feminism can be summarised as a “movement from the point of, by, and for women.”

Feminist artists during the 1960s and 70s such as Judy Chicago and Joan Semmel challenged how the female body was represented as an art object by history, politics and technology. They demonstrated how ideals of beauty are a social construct historically determined by males for males. They also explored issues associated with body ideals in relation to the social and cultural issues of the time. Semmel and Chicago employed a new range of mediums and methods not usually associated with gallery exhibition. These included the inclusion of embroidery, quilting and pottery which had previously been considered craft rather than fine art activities. From the 1980s feminist artists such as Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer incorporated additional innovative methods and media. These included the use of humour, challenging the precious nature of the original, incorporating the interaction of the viewer, appropriating images from the mass media, incorporating text and employing technology. An example of an artwork incorporating a number of these features is the work by Kruger titled Your Body Is A Battlefield. Images and text appropriated from the mass media make a powerful political statement concerning abortion in addition to alternative readings about how our self image is controlled and influenced by the mass media.

417 Ibid.
418 Ibid.
419 Ibid.
420 Ibid.
421 Ibid. p159.
Following the 1960s and 70s, a number of women from non-Caucasian backgrounds such as bell hooks\textsuperscript{422} and Shulamith Firestone\textsuperscript{423} began to challenge feminism and feminist theory by suggesting it was Eurocentric in its approach; being primarily concerned with problems faced by white, middle-class Western women while claiming to represent the interests of all women.\textsuperscript{424}

Since the 1990s, activists and theorists such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty\textsuperscript{425}, Maria Lugones,\textsuperscript{426} Elizabeth Spelman and Bridget Anderson\textsuperscript{427} emerged from within a diversity of communities and began to focus on issues that crossed boundaries of social class, race, religion and culture that were inclusive of all women.\textsuperscript{428} This triggered an acknowledgment among some within the feminist movement regarding its multifaceted character and initiated the process of feminism disowning its one-size-fits-all approach.\textsuperscript{429} According to Thompson, the fragmentation in the idea of a universal woman led to a shift in approach by some feminist scholars and intellectuals from modernist to postmodernist. Positioning feminist theory as either a modernist or postmodernist philosophy is debated by Susan Heckerman who suggests

\textsuperscript{422} bell hooks, \textit{Ain’t I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism}, South End Press, Boston, 1981.
\textsuperscript{426} Maria Lugones & Elizabeth Spelman, ‘Have We Got a Theory For You?’, \textit{Women’s Studies International Forum}, Vol. 6, 1994, pp. 65-8.
\textsuperscript{429} Mascia-Lees, E. Frances, & Patricia Sharpe, \textit{Taking a Stand In a Feminist World: Toward an Engaged Cultural Criticism}, State University of New York Press, USA, 2000, p. 3.
feminism is “both historically and theoretically a modernist movement” while Glennis Israel suggests “feminism is often referred to as the first postmodernist movement” because in its various forms it attacked consumerism, the stereotyping of women, the power of the media and the role of power in a patriarchal society.

While similarities between both feminism and postmodernism can be identified such as a commitment to the deconstruction of the masculinised Western ideology and the challenge to the epistemological foundations of Western thought, how these objectives can be realised remains a point of conjecture. For example Heckerman argues that while “feminism aims to appropriate the masculine power as its own … postmodernism aims to dissolve this power completely, divulging an equal subjectivity for all parties”. Postmodernism also advocates a belief in the fragmented self with the idea of a ‘unified whole’ existing only within an illusionary reality. The disparate points of view expressed by Heckerman and Israel regarding the positioning of feminism as either a modernist or postmodernist movement mirrors the changing consciousness within feminism in relation to the multifaceted dimensions of identity and the concerns of women globally. For example modernism regarded identity as the identity you were born with in the same way feminism attempted to universalise the notion of woman. However a new understanding was forged as a result of global diasporas, cultural interaction, globalisation and the communication of ideas and technologies and contributed to the notion of a postmodern identity. Postmodernism recognised that people experience multiple sometimes conflicting cultural identities and the concept of a transnational identity came into being. This view was mirrored within feminism when it acknowledged a one-size–fits-all approach was no longer appropriate and the diverse voices of women globally began to be heard. According to Sullivan postmodernism brought into sharper focus the exciting possibilities now lying before anyone interested in human engagement within a changing social, cultural and global world. My art work and that of the following artists provides a way of exploring some of the ramifications brought about by these changes on the lives of women from non-European backgrounds and a lens by which to heighten insight at a critical juncture in time.

434 Ibid.
4.6. Studio Practice

Studio practice comprises a method of inquiry that is “responsive, reflective, and strategic, resulting in the creation of new forms and meaning”. My art practice and studio investigations permit me to speak with my own voice; to respond to and critique the larger issues shaping the non-white participants’ experience. The aim is to illuminate the spectre of white privilege and to encourage the viewer to question the personal cost accompanying its preservation. The intention of my artwork is to convey meaning to a mainstream audience concerning the institutionalisation of whiteness in Australian society and to highlight its effects on non-white women in Australia. The artworks are directed as much to the general public as they are to an art audience. Lucy Lippard suggests,

…[T]he more sophisticated artists become the more they are able to make art that works on several levels. They can make specific artworks for specific audiences and situations, or they can try to have their cake and eat it too, with one work affecting art audiences one way and general audiences another …Art that is not confined to a single context under the control of a market and ruling class taste is much harder to neutralise. And it is often quite effective seen within the very citadels of power it criticizes.

The intention of exhibiting these works away from gallery walls and museums among the general public combined with an awareness of the risk to restate rather than usurp stereotypical representations of race contributed to the life of the work becoming increasingly didactic. This approach is particularly evident in the work of such artists as Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer who manipulate advertising, commercial media and text in a direct approach to confront abusive power structures and challenge viewers to evaluate their current attitudes. This approach may lead to criticisms of the work as being too one dimensional, lacking the subtlety and depth of meaning available within a more layered and restrained approach. It is because of the inherent difficulties of working with images of race outlined previously and the intended audience for which this work was produced that the value of this approach is evident. These factors have significantly influenced the subsequent direction of the artworks created in response to the primary and secondary research.

The art works made in response to and critiquing issues raised in the theoretical research bring together the outer world of the social with the inner world of the psyche. My visual art practice interprets the tension created between both spheres through spatial metaphor. The concept of inner and outer space parallels fabrication methods used in my work where a hollow internal space is shelled by a ceramic skin separating it from the external space it occupies. A framework for intertextual analyses is produced through the artworks by connecting conceptual bridges between the internal experiences of the individuals involved and the external expression of this experience. This dynamic facilitates a transfer of meaning deployed through an understanding of how the work is made, where it comes from and what its meaning may infer for me as the artist and the viewer. The studio practice provided a site for material and conceptual exploration, problem solving and material production. I chose to explore a diversity of materials such as glass, wax, ceramics, resin and plaster, a range of surfacing techniques in addition to newly explored fabricating and casting techniques such as silicon rubber and resin casting, mould making and fibre glass casing. This foray into new technical and material domains corresponded to a need to question the framing of my art practice. In supplying artworks to commercial galleries my work had previously been geared towards mainstream appeal. Contemporary fashions had influenced many of my aesthetic choices in regards to surfacing, colour and style. These considerations were very often considered in the manufacture of artworks designed for a commercial audience. This approach and style of work was not necessarily going to convey the more politically charged nature of my current research. In re-evaluating this position I brought a more subjective interpretation and response into play. Throughout this personal journey and the development of new technical and conceptual arenas my primary goal has been to create quality work that engages the viewer with the issues examined in the theoretical research. I have transferred these issues from the private sphere into the public domain in the expectation of facilitating change through heightened perception and public awareness. I believe that the greater the number of people of all races who become mindfully involved and concerned with these issues the better chance we have of initiating positive change.

Throughout my PhD candidature I experimented with a range of styles and approaches in an effort to find the most effective means for communicating the ethical dilemmas raised throughout this study. Stylised and exaggerated
representations of the non-white figure, seen in such works as *The Makeover* (Figure 124) and *Mirror Mirror* (Figure 129), sit alongside caricatures of the red necked white male. *Having My Cake and Eating it Too* (Figure 144). In the continual review and assessment which accompanied my journey I began to question the effectiveness of the various approaches I used. While I support the position which argues for the right of all artists to respectfully make representations of all races I found my efforts in critiquing the issues raised using a stylised figurative representation were largely unsuccessful. Working as a white artist with representations of the non-white figure was found to be extremely challenging. Efforts to convey my concerns and those raised by the participants interviewed through a stylised figurative representation encountered numerous obstacles when I failed to consider the implications resulting from a broader social and historical context. For example the misreading of visual clues previously discussed in relation to the Charles Buckley Sports Illustrated cover emerged as an issue in the reading of a number of my works. An inability to appreciate the subtle changes in physical/facial characteristics between the races depicted was overlooked by some viewers from both Indigenous and European backgrounds. Instead the form’s dark colour dominated as a racial signifier and resulted in all the black works being read as Indigenous representations. The familiar refrain among many Europeans that all Asians look the same despite very real differences highlights the difficulties of working with images of race and the cultural and historical sensitivities involved when whites venture into the sensitive arena of race representation. Ambiguity in the positioning of the figures either on the floor or on a traditional plinth also emerged as an issue of consideration. For some viewers difficulties arose when the non-white figures were displayed on a traditional white plinth. The notion of displaying the non-white figure on a plinth was regarded as perpetuating a particularly Eurocentric practice of display and once again subjecting the non-white to Eurocentric practices. On the other hand positioning the figures on the floor was viewed to repeat historical stereotypical representations of the non-white by the white image maker, as impoverished. Compounding the issue was the figure’s nakedness which was seen to restate the stereotyped notion of the impoverished ‘naked native’. As a result of these difficulties I decided all but one of the works made in this style would be omitted from the Assessment Exhibition held at NEXT Gallery on the 24th July, 2007.
The work Mirror Mirror (Figure 129) was included in the assessment show as I regarded it as the most successful in engaging the mainstream viewer with the forces at work that support and maintain the institutionalisation of whiteness. However the realisation that my current strategy was largely unsuccessful in conveying my concerns led to a new realisation and orientation. I eventually concluded my role as the artist, interviewer, the collator of material and conduit for interpreting the voice of the non-white participants was the central point of reference in relaying the information and conveying the issues raised. Following this shift in orientation the artworks began to reflect the challenges and issues raised by the participants as they related to me. I subsequently began to focus on my role, complicity and investment in the current Eurocentric system which affords me privilege as a result of my white skin colour. This approach emerged as the central theme for the production of a far more substantial body of work.

The works Traversing the Border Country and The Foreigner Within, while being the most technically challenging were also the most effective in communicating the issues raised by this study. The comments shared by the non-white participants interviewed were valuable not only in illuminating the spectre of bias to a broader mainstream white audience as documented in the exegesis but also revealing how it related to me, at the personal/individual level. The diversity of works made throughout my PhD candidature and outlined in the following discourse reflect the challenges and changes made as I as a white artist attempt to raise issues surrounding the forces at work in infiltrating the institutionalisation of whiteness. As a consequence of the difficulties outlined I took the decision to omit many of the stylised representations of the non-white figure from the assessment show and house them in a backroom exhibit as documentation of the work researched and produced throughout the candidature. The following piece Twisted remains one of these works.

Twisted interrogates the external pressures on non-white women to conform to the European body shape ideals. The African women interviewed identified their larger buttocks, thighs, frizzy hair and overall physical frame as problematic features when attempting to conform to Western standards of beauty. This is despite these attributes still being considered beautiful in some areas in Africa. As this piece was critiquing Western pressures on African women’s body shapes, aesthetic reference is made to the stylistic features of Picasso (and therefore African art).
Picasso in his painting *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (figure 114) and the *Dream* (figure 120) reduced the component body parts into simplified geometric shapes that were then reassembled and semi abstracted. Similarities in style and influence can be identified in the angular and rounded components of *Twisted* to the abstracted and reductionist treatment of the form.
Standing two metres high this hand built ceramic sculpture (Twisted) critiques the permeation and domination of Western culture and aesthetics on non-European cultures world wide.

Historically totems provided Indigenous cultures with visual representations of a group’s identity. Totemic imagery or visual motifs conveyed attitudes and values to the wider community. In my piece (Twisted) the black figures’ contorted bodies critique the power relations involved in the globalisation of the white European woman as the universal model of ideal female beauty as well as its impact on many African women who attempt to emulate this unrealistic ideal. White hand prints marked on all sections of the two figures suggest the all encompassing nature of the pressures imposed by a Western dominated aesthetic on every aspect of their bodies.

By referring to ancient representations of human presence the archetypal hand print suggests the psychological and physical imprints one human being makes on another. Like the figures in Picasso’s *Demoiselles d’Avignon* (Figure 104) my piece has rearranged, dissected and semi abstracted the individual component body parts while remaining recognisably figurative. The curves and sharp angles of the body’s forms have been reassembled and distorted with one female figure positioned in a twisted configuration on top of another.

While commenting on the internal and external pressures experienced by non-whites to change racial characteristics in line with a European appearance this piece also comments on the perpetuation of such discriminatory practices by others within their own community. This pattern was highlighted throughout the interview process by interviewees who identified relatives and close friends as additional influences encouraging conformity to the ideal in the belief that the best interests of their loved ones were served if they complied. The positioning of one figure on top of the other suggests the power and influence exerted by those who are trusted while also acknowledging their views and attitudes are shaped by the dominant aesthetic that is Western culture. The unnatural configuration of distorted and contorted limbs speaks to the current twisted state of affairs which supports and facilitates the removal of specific racial characteristics.

It was earlier noted that approaches undertaken during the my PhD journey which attempted to speak for or represent the voice or experience of the other often resulted in being less effective than the artworks focusing on self inquiry. *Twisted* shares many similarities with the previous works discussed in relation to its possible misreading and placement. The figure’s large naked forms could easily read as a celebration of fecundity. Its positioning in the green and leafy outdoors could also be viewed as suggesting an association with fertility. These issues both further complicate the artist’s intended message.

A stylistic approach using predominantly figurative representations as in the work of Fernando Botero, (1932) the Columbian painter and bronze sculptor, was also a significant influence on my work. Working in a deliberately exuberant style Botero utilises exaggeration to emphasise light hearted representations of the people and
scenes around him. Botero’s figures have small heads, hands and feet in proportion to the figure’s body and limbs which are large and well rounded.

460 Figure 122

Female Nude
Fernando Botero

In contrast to Botero’s work the hands and heads in the following works have been exaggerated in relation to their bodies. The bodies themselves are uniform in size, colour and shape critiquing an interpretation of a human universality that varies only in minor features. These works were informed by the participant interviews that individually critiqued the particular experiences and concerns of the women involved.

Invisible was made in response to a comment by the Aboriginal participant Lyn who suggested it was rare to find Aboriginal woman in beauty pageants because Aboriginal features diverged ‘too far’ from the European defined parameters of beauty. This piece comments on their omission from images of beauty and through the use of oppositional images challenges the rhetoric that constantly inscribes whiteness. Bad Hair Day was made in response to an African participant’s comment regarding the problem frizzy hair posed for many African women and the lengths they go to in order to ‘control’ it. The Makeover critiques the grotesque brutality involved in the rhinoplasty procedures. This is conveyed by the Iranian woman with large exaggerated hands attempting to hammer a nail into her racially specific nose. The brutality associated with many popular cosmetic surgery procedures such as a face lift where the surgeon peels back the upper layer of skin before lifting and restitching, the breaking or shaving of nose cartilage to reshape and resize the nose, the sawing off of the ankles followed by the insertion of pins which get twisted eight times a day to achieve more height is conveyed through the bizarre and grotesque aspects of this sculpture.

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This installation was exhibited at SCU as part of the series of exhibitions and workshops designed to further interrogate dimensions of whiteness. Acceptance into the 25th Gold Coast International Ceramic Award 2006 and the International Borderpolitics of Whiteness Conference held in Sydney December 2006 saw the installation exhibited to broader audiences. The installation situates the three individual works into a circular arrangement suggesting the familiar positioning of people in conversation.

This arrangement alludes to the communication between women in relation to body dissatisfaction as well as illustrating the format during the gathering of primary research material when the women who participate in the group interview process were at times informally seated around a coffee table. The placing of alphabetical letters pooled within the circular space and between the sides of each figure into the...
public space provides a reference to the power of text and media when employed by commercial interests to exacerbate body image dissatisfaction. It also suggests the influence language exerts within private and public spaces on people’s lives and attitudes. This arrangement allowed me to comment on concerns regarding the media’s ability to encroach and penetrate the intimate private zones of people’s minds and hearts.

The alphabetical letters also reference the use of language to perpetuate racial bias. The English language has inculcated stereotypical associations of colour into its vocabulary. Murray Paterson commented on the way language colours our perceptions saying, “Sometimes when I think about the big things the little things become clear. The trouble is I think in English.” The metaphorical use of whiteness in the English language in comments such as a ‘white lie’ and ‘black humour’ demonstrates the extent to which our thinking has been racialised.

Excerpts from the interviews were incorporated into the graduation exhibition; conversations with the interviewees filled the open spaces surrounding the spectator. This alluded to the position of the media in the lives of many people and its ability to consume the empty spaces in our public and private environments.

The topic of media penetration into the private sphere of peoples’ lives is also dealt with by the feminist artist of the 1980s Barbara Kruger in her installation titled *Power Pleasure, Desire Disgust*. In this work Kruger combines text, sound, video and performance to critique and subvert the L’Oreal ‘because-I’m-worth-it’ attitude employed by advertising. Slide projectors project white text onto blackened wall surfaces in the gallery. These words change approximately every ten seconds. Projected on the rear of the gallery wall are three large-scale video heads that speak loudly and create an overwhelming cacophony of image and noise. The combination of diatribe, text, comments, conversations and image speak to the overwhelming...
imposition of visual and auditory noise encompassing and permeating the public and private zones of people’s everyday lives.  

Figure 127  
Installation: Power, Pleasure, Power, Disgust  

This topic was further explored in the following piece, Under My Skin, which critiques the infiltration and pervasive penetration of white influence into the intimate private spheres, the psyche and social spaces of many non-whites. This incursion undermines self esteem and identity. It is this unwelcome surreptitious intrusion that is evoked in this piece.

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The following pieces belong to the series of works previously discussed which respond to comments made by the interviewed participants and their concerns regarding particular aspects of their body. *Mirror Mirror* depicts a woman of Asian heritage gazing into a mirror. The reflected image is of a blue-eyed blonde European woman. This piece comments on the overrepresentation of idealised images of European women, that non-whites are confronted with on a daily basis. It also responds to the comments of Chinese participant Emily Tan who in her mind’s eye perceived herself to be European with blonde hair and blue eyes. She stated she often forgot she has an Asian appearance and was reminded abruptly by a reflection in a mirror or shop front window.
This subject matter was also explored by the African American photographer Carrie Mae Weems in the following work also titled Mirror Mirror. In this black and white photograph Weems refers to the fairy tale Snow White to powerfully challenge contemporary quotidian power structures.

Carrie Mae Weems was born in Portland, Oregon in 1953. She has a fine arts degree from the California Institute of the Arts and a master of fine arts from the University of California. Exhibiting since the 1980s, she has been in over 200 group exhibitions. These include the 1991 Whitney Biennial, New York, University Art Museum, California, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C in the United States, and in Japan, Germany, Canada, Korea, Italy, Finland, South Africa. She has had over 60 solo exhibitions including the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, The New Museum of Contemporary Art and the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California. Weems is an African American artist who is committed to social change and employs her artwork in service to this end. Her work explores the topic of race and racism, class, gender and sexism.
Associating her images with an historical narrative such as the fairy tale is a technique Weems often employs to encourage the re-evaluation and examination of that tradition. She frequently achieves this by including someone in the picture who was never there, substituting one character with another and/or introducing text. The practice of reconstructing an image using pictorial conventions combined with the insertion of additional components creates an intertextuality which functions to usurp the power structures situated within the original composition. Weems regards the image as playing a significant role in the construction of identity. By incorporating text and referencing historical narratives Weems’ images are positioned in the service of a reality that lies outside the image as she attempts to use her art for the empowerment of African Americans who have been historically oppressed and marginalised.

In the staging of a preliminary exhibition of PhD works I placed around the parameter of the wall a line of text designed to assist the viewer in the reading of the exhibition’s narrative. Black and white letters travel the parameter of the rooms’ walls leading the viewer as they read the text in a journey through the exhibition space. Taken from a quote by Ian Chambers the text articulates the difficulties an individual encounters as they leave the security of the familiar social and cultural environment into an unfamiliar realm known as the ‘border country’. His comments articulate my personal journey conveyed through the life size sculpture of the same name Traversing The Border Country.

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448 Ibid.
449 Ibid.
For, in breaking into my own body of speech, opening up the gaps and listening to the silences in my own inheritance, I perhaps learn to tread lightly among the limits of where I am speaking from. I begin to comprehend that where there are limits there also exists other voices, bodies, worlds, on the other side, beyond my particular boundaries. In the pursuit of my desire to cross such frontiers I am paradoxically forced to face my confines, together with the excess that seeks to sustain the dialogues across them. Transported some way into this border country, I look into a potentially further space: the possibility of another place, another world, another future.450

The use of text is demonstrated once again in the work of Weems to assist in a clear reading of the work and confront the viewer. In the following works Weems has used the mirror as a metaphor for reflection and intertextuality in works such as Not Manet’s Type and a photographic still life composition taken from the Kitchen Table Series.

Art Practice as Research

Figure 132
Not Manet's Type
Carrie Mae Weems, 1997

Figure 133
From The Kitchen Table Series
Carrie Mae Weems, 1990.

Figure 134
Reflecting you, me and us together diptych.
Ink on Canvas
Part of The Louisiana Project

Figure 135

References:
Using mirrors to facilitate a deeper understanding of subjectivity is illustrated in the two photographs *Reflecting you, me and us together diptych*. (Figure 134 and Figure 135) composed by Weems as part of the Louisiana Project.\(^{455}\) Again, by referencing an historical narrative Weems transplants black African women into the affluent environment evocative of Marie Antoinette’s 18th century French court. Weems believes the attitudes allegedly prompting Marie Antoinette’s famous words ‘let them eat cake’ is reminiscent of the dismissive attitudes of many in the dominant culture towards African Americans and the difficulties they experience.\(^{456}\) These works also speak of the non-European woman’s experience of exclusion from formal images of power, seduction and beauty.

The reflected images in previously discussed works of mine such as *Monster Blondes* and *Mirror Mirror* also relate to this issue and use the reflected image to speak of this marginalisation and usurpation of identity.

The incorporation of text with image prevalent in the works of Weems is also evident in the work of Barbara Kruger’s well known feminist works of the 1980s and 90s. Seen in the following figure 136 *We Have Received Orders Not to Move* (1982) and *Buy Me I’ll Change Your Life* (1984), figure 137 the use of text challenges the viewer to make a choice or response.

\(^{457}\) Figure 136

*Buy Me I’ll Change Your Life.*


\(^{458}\) Figure 137

*We Have Received Orders Not to Move*

Barbara Kruger, 1982.

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\(^{455}\) Ibid. Accessed 09/11/06.


\(^{458}\) Barbara Kruger, Image Search, *We Have Received Orders Not to Move*, 02/02/2007.
In my ceramic compositions the addition of text and alphabetical lettering provides additional meaning to the sculpture’s overall reading. In Figure 138 the placement of one figurative sculpture on the floor facing a brick wall invites the viewer to reflect upon its inner meaning. The text placed above the figure on the brick wall reads OPEN in reverse (NEPO) suggests the non-white figure is viewing the text from the other side of the door. This narrative infers the lack of opportunity and options available to many non-whites in contrast to the open door analogy available to those on the other side of the door (inferred whites). Through the use of narrative, text and an allegorical door the experience of the marginalised other is visually articulated and conveyed.

Figure 138
Closed

Through the following photographic works Weems further develops issues of racism and stereotyping by adding text which subverts the racist notions inscribed in the original context. She combines archival images by Frances Benjamin Johnstone into the following works. Johnstone was an established photographer commissioned in 1899 to document the Hampton Institute for the Contemporary American Life Exhibition at the Universal Exposition in Paris in the 1900s. Johnstone’s pictures documented the progress of both African and Native in being assimilated into

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mainstream society. Weems used these historical documentations and combined these images with poetry and prose from writers and theorists providing a caustic commentary on this institution’s racist function.460

461 Figure 139

*The Armstrong Triptych*
from The Hampton Project

462 Figure 140

*From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried.*
Carrie Mae Weems, 1995.

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These works expose the humiliating conventions historically used by Europeans in documentaries. By adding text and narrative Weems forces the viewer to re-examine the history and role of photographic imagery, and representation in general, in the stereotyping of black citizens in America.\footnote{Ibid.}

Using text and image to address issues of racial bias was combined in my work below. It also highlights other parallels between the subject matter of both Weems’ work and my own. The skin colour hierarchy operating within many colonised countries was an area of particular interest to me. The observation by African interviewee Hélène, in relation to the importance of skin colour at the moment of a child’s birth within Ethiopian/African culture became the catalyst for the following piece. In contrast to European custom, Hélène referred to the first question asked by close friends and family following a birth as being not what sex the baby is, but what skin colour the baby has. Possible responses include the skin colour being described as either red, white or blue. Because of the importance of skin colour to a baby’s future prospects skin colour is regarded as an extremely significant feature.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{red_white_blue_babies}
\caption{Red White and Blue Babies}
\end{figure}

\textit{Red White and Blue Babies}

In critiquing the concept of a skin colour hierarchy I digitally manipulated an image of a white baby to feature the additional colours of red and blue. These images were then transposed onto decals, fired onto sheets of translucent glass and mounted using
copper pipe inserted into the top of corresponding coloured resin casts of arms. The baby’s image is held up by the adult sized arm marking the parent’s expectation and hope associated with the birth of a new born child. The vertical placement of each arm and image in close proximity to the other references them as emblematic colours of colonial countries such as Britain, France and America. These countries played a significant role in correlating whiteness with power and therefore desirability. The closed fist and upwardly thrust forearm has been historically used to express a desire for freedom and protest oppression for instance in the Statue of Liberty. These arms however line up to protest the social structures which ensure the continuation of a biased and oppressive skin colour hierarchy.

![Image of art piece]

Figure 142.  
*Red White and Blue Babies, (Detail)*  

The translucent properties of resin resonate with the historically transparent qualities that are now routinely stereotyped with white skin. From ancient Greek vases to the religious painters of the Renaissance to cosmetic product advertisements for women in the 21st century, white skin has been routinely associated with translucency and purity. Resin and glass provided the translucent qualities of skin that I desired to critique the relationship between possible skin colour descriptions and the emblematic colours associated with previous colonial powers. This relationship was further developed with the addition of text placed onto the wall directly below the
supporting plinths. The text records the comments previously noted by Hélène and Rebecca creating columns of narrow red, white and blue stripes.

Figure 143.

*Red White and Blue Babies*,

This topic was again explored in the following iconic fertility figurine made by layering red, white and blue resin. Her bulging pregnant belly critiques the institutionalised social skin colour hierarchy which governs the realisation of each unborn child’s potential. The red, white and blue colouring of the internal and external form suggests the nature of the social system that determines the potential of the unborn child. This aspect is the most disturbing facet surrounding the phenomenon of the skin colour hierarchy. The incorporation in the installation of comments regarding this topic by Helene and Rebecca combined with three baby hands decorated in red white and blue stars and stripes further critiques European colonialisit exploits and their marginalising enterprise, as these are the flag and national colours of major colonial powers (eg UK, France, USA).
The following piece titled *Having My Cake and Eating It Too* explores further the notion of white power using stereotypical representations. The colonial exploitation of Australia by Europeans who invaded and then carved up tracts of land belonging to the Indigenous population is conveyed through this figurative piece. Also conveyed is the importation and institutionalisation of white power into the Australian social structures as it forged a new national identity. Modelled from porcelain paper clay the figure’s ogre like facial expression and physical characteristics are intended to suggest an insensitivity to the needs of others as these colonial exploits were undertaken. Its didactic representation is intended to confront the viewer with an alternative narrative at odds with the traditional representation conveyed by many white artists.

![Image of sculpture](image)

**Figure 144**

*Having My Cake and Eating It Too*

Weems explores this topic further through her series *Coloured People* (1989-90) which deals with the range of skin colours attributed to ‘black’ people. She incorporates text which lists the innumerable gradations in skin tones attributed to black people and highlights this theme by using black and white photographs which are washed with a variety of colours.  

![Image of a cake with a flag design](image)

- **Blue Black Boy** from the series *Colored People*, 1989-90
  Carrie Mae Weems *Coloured People*

![Image of three photographs](image)

For example the image *Blue Black Boy* is a black and white photograph washed with indigo blue, the *Honey Coloured Boy* with a yellow brown wash. The titles of these appear in large black text across the bottom of each work further emphasising the historically stigmatising and racially oppressive practice that continues to operate.

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within both black and white communities world wide. Weems' use of the word 'boy' in the title also refers to racially loaded language used by whites to put and keep down African American males.\(^{465}\)

The following works were made from wax and resin and continue to explore the theme of a skin colour hierarchy. I cast multiple *Venus of Willendorf* type figurines in white paraffin wax to explore aspects of isolation resulting from minority status. These multiple white casts sit beside a solitary brown figure made from cold cast bronze. Arranged in a row around the gallery walls, the viewer is surrounded by the repetitive motif of this ancient iconic figure, presented on small wooden wall plinths. Columns of text written in red and blue upon the stark white wall reinforce the colonialist instituted skin colour hierarchy. The choice of wax and resin as the casting medium was associated with its luminous and tactile qualities which related to the qualities associated in advertising media with white skin. The text records the statements provided by the participant interviews which share personal stories of hardship experienced as a result of this skin colour hierarchy. (See chapter 3.1. on Skin Colour)

![Image of sculptures](image)

**Figure 147**

*Quite White*

Ruth Park, 2005.

*Colour Bind* (figure 148) additionally explores issues associated with the skin colour hierarchy. Layers of red, white and blue resin poured into a silicon rubber mould

create the iconic female fertility shaped figurine. In commenting on the role of skin colour and its relationship to status, the translucent quality of resin was also utilised to again draw attention to the relationship between skin colour and that of colonial powers, their national colours and the resulting colonialist mentality which effected many non-white women in relation to the attractiveness of their own bodies and specific physical features.

Figure 148

*Colour Bind*


The topic of skin colour preference was further explored in the following composition titled *Whitewashed*. *Whitewashed* critiques the desire of many non-white women to acquire a paler skin colour through the use of a range of potentially harmful treatments. This piece presents a woman acting out the whitewashing of her own unique racial characteristics and invites the viewer to consider the personal cost associated with preserving the institutionalisation of white bias.
The following works by the artist Yong Soon Min titled *AlterNatives* (1995) (figure 150)\(^{466}\) emphasise the implications of race and skin colour in determining acceptability and its use as a method of categorisation in immigration and society in general. In this piece the individual is required to find a skin colour match before official documentation and stamping can proceed. The title *AlterNatives* comments on the expectations of non-European migrants to change or *alter* themselves upon migrating to their adopted homeland and their status as aliens or ‘natives’.

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\(^{466}\) Jean Kee, Yong Soon Min & Alan De Souza, *Subverting the Slant*, Yale University, 1997.

Yong Soon Min was born in Korea in 1953 and immigrated to America at the age of seven. She received her BFA and MFA from the University of California, Berkeley and is currently Associate Professor of studio art at the University of California in Irvine. Yong Soon Min has exhibited in the United Kingdom, Canada, the Philippines, South Korea, and the United States and currently lives in New York. Min emigrated to the U.S. following the Korean War in the early 1960s. Being raised and educated in the U.S. she came to identify herself as a Korean American. Min is concerned with feminist issues of subjectivity. Her works deal with issues surrounding the complexities of race, cultural identity and the politics of representation. They also record her experiences of cultural displacement.
My work *Wash and Wear* explores aspects of negative body image among many African young girls. Made in two sections this piece is two metres high and approximately one metre wide. Wire was embedded with resin into the head cavity to secure it tightly. The exaggerated thighs and hips contrasting with the elongated torso comment on the preoccupation of African women in relation to these aspects of their body and the time and energy invested by them in trying to achieve an unrealistic European inspired body ideal.
The sculpture created in 2006 titled Monster Blondes (Figure 153) explores further the role played by media representations of idealised white women in the fuelling of body dissatisfaction among non-white women. The scale of media exposure is unprecedented in human history. According to Cindi Tebbel, a previous editor of a woman’s magazine, one in 11 advertisements carries a direct message about beauty. The enormity of this exposure is suggested in the multiple casts of white arms, plinths and accompanying masks. The fragmented pieces suggest a whole. The ripped and torn fragments allude to women’s changing attitudes towards invasive surgical solutions as a means of altering the appearance of the female body. The remaking of
the female body is now considered analogous to ‘making over’ the house or garden in television programs such as *Backyard Blitz*. *Body Works* now competes for an audience to reveal alternate transformations. The idealised images that surround us are often fragmented rather than complete bodies. Advertisements for make-up for example often concentrate on particular aspects of the face creating a notion of parts divorced from the whole. In September 1994, the women’s magazine *Mirabella* featured an image of a idealised model on its front cover. The caption accompanying the image asked, “Who is the face of America?” It was later revealed the image itself was a composite made from combining six pictures of six different women.468

![Mirabella](image)

**Figure 152.**

*Face of America*

Composite image made from six images of six different women.

The choice of medium became a significant consideration in my artwork when critiquing media influences on female body dissatisfaction. A pure white porcelain paper/clay body was selected to suggest the skin colour of the dominant aesthetic while also alluding to the medium of paper on which these images are so often projected. When the mask shapes were removed from the clay slab, an irregular edged surface analogous to torn paper was created by only partially cutting the clay and pulling the remaining clay apart. This technique links the images themselves with their print media origins and the sculptures’ overall critique of media related issues.

469 Ibid.
In *Monster Blondes* (Figure 153) the image was composed by repositioning facial fragments from media advertising images creating an intertextuality that subverts the notion of the ideal white woman. By repositioning such idealised compositions into a grotesque representation of blue eyed blondes the accumulation and generation of

470 The performance art work of French artist Orlan is relevant to the current discussion. Utilising video & film Orlan facilitates a debate about western cultures preoccupation with altering the body for non medical reasons which incorporates aspects of the grotesque. Orlan uses the new medical advances to challenge our aesthetics of beauty by subjecting herself to multiple plastic surgery operations. Orlan records the operations on film and video and regards them as performance art. Orlan encourages debate on the use of plastic surgery by choosing to rearrange her facial features in a controversial way. For example in a performance piece titled *The Reincarnation of Saint Orlan*, Orlan selected individual facial features from a number of well known artworks. The eyebrows were based on Leonardo Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa and the chin imitated Botticelli’s famous painting of Venus. This combination of disparate features formed the basis to the remaking of Orlan’s face. Following this work Orlan embarked on another operation which involved rebuilding her nose to its largest possibility. Titled *Self Hybridization*, Orlan’s nose now starts protruding from the middle of her forehead and is disproportionately large in comparison to the rest of her face. By incorporating aspects of the grotesque Orlan challenges society’s obsession with cosmetic surgery and its use by women to meet an illusionary ideal.
meaning for the viewer in one context is transferred to be destabilised in the other. The overrepresentation of blue eyed blonde women in media images is also critiqued by the multiple white arms and images they carry. A reference to the masquerade balls of the European elite allows the decaled masks to critique the anonymity whiteness can provide its wearer.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 154.**

**Detail**

*Monster Blondes*

It also alludes to and usurps the investment by many white women in mimicking the ideal through cosmetic procedures which sometimes have disfiguring and grotesque outcomes. The uniformity associated with such narrow definitions of ideal beauty are themselves grotesque as they encourage many diverse women to conform to an unnatural and arbitrary parameter. By mounting the arms on pillars I elongated the overall visual appearance and situated the imaged masks relative to human height. When passing between the columns mounted with masked hands the viewers’ personal space is encroached on from all sides. The gazing eyes of the masks look back at the viewer while the viewer gazes upon masked faces. The aim is to create a similar unease to that created in installations by Bronwyn Beecroft who employs live naked models. Beecroft’s work often involves a staged encounter between the nude female models and the spectator. Beecroft uses the gaze as an instrument of
supremacy in her work\cite{471} to usurp the traditional relationship between viewer and viewed. She inverts this relationship by allowing the viewer to gaze at first from afar only to find this anonymity stripped away when he/she is suddenly confronted by the model’s returning gaze.\cite{472}

These figures, by appearing distant and remote, recreate the formal qualities of media advertising. Beecroft coiffures the models’ hair and make-up adding to the dramatics of her work and references the staged components accompanying media advertising. At the Gagosian Gallery (2001) in Los Angeles, Beecroft featured in VB46, a group of nude females in high heels who were flat chested and boyish in physique.\cite{474} Their skin and hair was coated in a thick white powder creating and emphasising the luminous white properties of the models’ skin colour and platinum blonde hair colour. Speaking about the show Beecroft commented,

They think breasts mean sex, OK, let’s get rid of breasts. Hips mean sex; let’s get rid of them. I want to see if the picture still works. I am imagining this bleached image, overexposed - blonde, platinum, albino.

In this way Beecroft was able to challenge the Hollywood feminine ideal\cite{475} and Western cultural perceptions of beauty.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure155}
\caption{Figure 155 \cite{473} Vanessa Beecroft, 2000.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure156}
\caption{Figure 156 \cite{473} Vanessa Beecroft, 2000.}
\end{figure}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \cite{472} Ibid.
\item \cite{475} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The installation of my own physical presence within the exhibition (figure 159) adds an additional dimension to the exhibition component. Standing centrally within the gallery space the piece encapsulates many personal aspects of the individual journey undertaken during this PhD candidature. Throughout this journey I have been forced to confront my own white blindness, acknowledge that the privileges I enjoy as a white woman result from cultural domination achieved at the expense of others. References to the aesthetic debt of the Greek Classical tradition in Western cultural heritage are incorporated by stylistic features such as the figure’s contrapposto stance, white surface, the customary drapery and renowned architectural column structures. The white surface provides a reference to my white skin colour whilst the opaque spectacles suggesting vision impairment or blindness. The figure is displayed naked suggests the vulnerability one experiences when journeying into unfamiliar territory; a journey into the border country as Chambers suggests.  

Traversing the Border Country is fraught with risk as the learning experiences are often painful. The
insecurity I experience at the public display of my nakedness is indicative of the vulnerability many white women experience when their body shape does not measure up to the cultural ideal. Accepting the discomfort I feel at being on public display parallels the acceptance of one's own body as it is reshaped and remoulded by the tides of life and time.

This work is an extension of earlier work created during my Masters of Fine Art candidature at the University of Newcastle. This artwork and research explored the effects of the western ideal on white women and in efforts to usurp this ideal I made well rounded white women, some of them incorporating cast body elements. The altering of my own body shape at the age of forty had stimulated an interest in body shape and esteem related issues. It was during this candidature I became conscious that white women's bodily concerns were not necessarily experienced among non-whites and my subsequent PhD topic was identified.

![Figure 159](image.png)

*Traversing the Border Country, (Self Portrait)*


Inspired by Peggy McIntosh’s’ comments regarding white privilege this piece explores the invisible knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides,
code books, passports, visas, compass, emergency gear and blank cheques.\textsuperscript{479} White people have access to, and the personal journey I travelled to comprehend this fact. Held in my hand is a compass and a set of callipers; a device used by ceramicists to measure space and distance. The callipers could be evocative of ethnographic implements used by European researchers to measure the physical variations of their non-white subjects; however its ceramic function and relationship to measuring distance was its intended correlation. Opaque optical lenses suggest my vision impairment; insight obscured by my own ignorance. In a recent performance the human rights lawyer, Julian Burnside stated, "It's fair to say that my white blindfold only came off fairly recently and until that time I didn't know that I had it on. But perhaps that's the point".\textsuperscript{480} His comments parallel my own experience during this PhD journey. My nakedness will no doubt also be confronting to some viewers. However its intent is to convey the removal of outward symbols of social privilege and the associated vulnerability. Despite the vulnerability experienced by exposing my nakedness in the public domain my white skin ensures my continued privilege, and hence the reference to the classical Greek tradition and its glorification in marble of the white woman's body. My presence within the exhibition also contextualises the representations created in response to the non-white women interviewed.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure160.png}
\caption{DVD Audio Visual Projection}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{479} Peggy McIntosh, 'White Privilege and Male Privilege', Wesley College Centre, Women's Working Papers Series, 1988, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{480} Human rights lawyer, Julian Burnside, at white blindness ceremony, Melbourne Town Hall, 13/08/2006.
A DVD projection onto the gallery walls shows a blinking blue eye overlayed with a spinning sphere of global maps and localised roads. These images are then again overlayed with images of morphing faces. The faces are comprised of women from multiracial backgrounds with one merging and morphing into the next. Snippets of recorded conversation natter incessantly in the background demanding the viewers’ full concentration in order to make sense of the many sounds generated. These random excerpts highlight their presence within the exhibition and contextualising their relationship as it relates to me. The incorporation of data projected images and video footage alludes to the notion of a journey. The large blue blinking eye laid with local and global maps enables me to symbolise the notion of viewing, observing, insight and discovery while the motion of the moving maps is reminiscent of the journey.

The following sculpture titled *The Foreigner Within* was inspired by the following quote by well known educationalist John Willinsky. In this quote Willinsky recognises the importance of learning to read and understand how we as individuals are shaped by the past. Learning to see ourselves as a foreigner is seen as one of the solutions in learning to understand difference according to Willinsky. Willinsky poetically states,

> We are not anything so much as what we have learned to call ourselves. Learning to read ourselves within and against how we have been written seems part of the educational project ahead. Learning to read oneself is also about learning to read the other, as we consider how to rewrite the learned and learn-ed perceptions of difference… how are we to overcome the foreignness that we have so often made of the other, if not by first finding it within ourselves. “The foreigner is within me,” Kristeva insists, “hence we are all foreigners.” We can better understand the shaping of that shared foreignness by studying the cultivation and manufacture, the cataloguing and display of the categories that have done so much for nation and empire. In this way we see how we are pierced by the persistent past.  

Peggy McIntosh describes one of the chief instruments of affording privilege is derived from processing a particular passport. In this sculpture the figure holds out an opened passport as if presenting it for identity purposes or travel. The figure’s black colouring correlates with the traditional Eurocentric reading of the ‘other’ or ‘Foreigner’. However from within the black skinned surface the figure peers out from between two white eyes. This usurps the previous association by suggesting the figure’s position and world view is white. Branded on the figure’s torso is the letter...
‘P’. Incorporating this letter with the branding process draws together the often barbaric and painful practice of branding animals with the labelling of the foreigner.

Figure 161
The Foreigner Within

Listening to and sharing the experiences of those marginalised by these biases provided the personal impetus and material to inform this body of work which believes in the possibility that art “might shake loose entrenched attitudes and forge alternative ways of being.”\textsuperscript{482} The women interviewed highlighted the ways in which whiteness installs itself as the dominant world view and becomes the standard from which everything else is judged. This practice has infiltrated all strata of society.\textsuperscript{483} Throughout the personal journey undergone in conjunction with my research I have been forced to question my own white privilege, acknowledge that it is a consequence of having a particular skin colour and persistently combat a mental inertia that discourages me from engaging in unknown and potentially uncomfortable situations. Unearthing the mechanisms that maintain whiteness will hopefully assist me in removing the white blindfold blinkering my vision. Venturing “into the border country, allows us all to look into a potentially further space”: the possibility of


\textsuperscript{483} Ibid.
“another place, another world, another future”, one which will hopefully embrace diversity and acknowledge the damaging legacy of a Eurocentric heritage.

The previous section has highlighted the evolution of ideas and content referenced throughout this creative period. By critiquing a number of related works by artists working in the field of race and the accompanying topics of identity and power I have been able to demonstrate the influences and parallels between their work and my own. Each artist discussed works with reference to their cultural heritage and history and seeks to address issues associated with cross-cultural translation and their place in these events. My art work adds to the discourse further contributing to the small but significant body of work responding to issues associated with the installation and maintenance of a dominant Eurocentric world view and history and its impact on personal identity. The following section documents the technical challenges and outcomes derived from the studio research.

4.7. Experimentation and Technical Challenges

One of my objectives was to acquire skills in new media and techniques. I achieved this by pushing the limits in scale and surface of my own traditional medium, clay, and through forays into previously unfamiliar media. Through experimentation I explored challenges in the scale of works undertaken with ceramic pieces measuring over two metres high and weighing 160 kilos. These were constructed by hand using a combination of coil, slab pinch and modelling techniques. These constructions presented logistical problems in terms of transport to and from the kiln and exhibition venues. The following images illustrate the scale of the works being assembled and fired.

Figure 162

120cm wide base coil built 32 cubic ft kiln

A range of new surfacing techniques was developed and applied to the documented and exhibited works. This involved the layering of a variety of air dried enamels to create a resource of surface treatments that would assist in deploying the artworks’ meaning and aesthetics. Creating a likeness to aged metallic surfaces such as iron or bronze, to slick surfaces vibrating with colour, revealed a reservoir of possibilities applicable to ceramic and non-ceramic surfaces. The addition of acid over some surfaces facilitated a more organic and muted surface texture. For example a cast made from mixing resin with bronze dust (cold cast bronze) was washed with copper sulphate and then wrapped with aluminium foil. A few days later the foil was removed to reveal a rich aged and mottled bronzed appearance. Commercial paints also revealed an interesting repertoire of surface options. (Figure 162, 167, 168 etc)
A particular challenge was to find a technique whereby I could incorporate text on a ceramic surface in a way that was compatible with aesthetic concerns and at the same time enhanced the conceptual content. By accident the following technique was discovered and aided in solving the challenge. Oil based white gloss was painted with a fine brush over a layer of matte black and then lightly resprayed using matte black. This final surfacing created a silvery reflective surface and was used in combination with other colours and stencils to create a variety of interesting and visually appealing surface effects. This technique was used on the ceramic sculpture *Whitewashed* to marry the black figure to its white painted hand. In reference to the pixilation in photographic media and the molecular structure that comprises everything and everyone, white circular markings dot the figure’s forearm blending the whitening
process with the figure's black skin colouring. Variations were also applied to the final surfacing of *Twisted* and proved useful in creating a sense of depth from multiple layering of the surface.

Figure 173

Figure 174

Test Pieces

Numerous tests on surface treatments were carried out. These images represent only a small sample that used air dried enamels, acids and mineral additions to create useful surfaces applicable to my body of work.

Designing and applying a digitalised photographic image by way of a decal to a ceramic surface was also a challenge. Through the decal process I was able to compile my own compositions, scan these into a PC and transfer them at a very high resolution and quality onto a decal stencil compatible with ceramic processes. The newly created collaged compositions were scanned and emailed to a decal manufacturer. Once returned the decal was applied to a gloss glazed surface and refired to 800 degrees. Pictorial fragments of white women's faces were appropriated from women's magazines and collaged into a composition critiquing mediated images of beauty. Appropriating media images of idealised white women provided a means of critiquing media depictions of whiteness using the very medium that transmitted them. The ceramic profiles on which the decals were laid are made from white porcelain paper clay. On removing the excess clay from around the cut profile the clay's edge was pulled creating a torn paper appearance referencing the women's magazines from which the images were appropriated. The slab on the opposite side has a white textured pattern evocative of a magnified detail of white skin. This texture was made from plaster casting textured paper. The paper clay slabs were
rolled onto this plaster mould creating a textured surface on one side and a smooth surface on the other suitable for the application of decals. The smooth side was then gloss fired to 1100 before the decals were applied and then refired.

![Figure 175. Plaster mould made from textured paper](image1)

![Figure 176 Figure 177. Digitalised image Ceramic Decals fired onto glazed surface](image2)

The finished slabs were then mounted onto brass rods which were inserted into the plaster cast forearms creating a mask-like appearance held up to the face by the hand.
Decaled slabs mounted on plaster cast arms

Initially the forearm was modelled from clay and then cast using a silicon rubber and fibreglass casing.

Making a silicon rubber and fibreglass mould of a clay model.

Multiple plaster casts were created from the one mould. These were then sanded using wet and dry paper to create a smooth surface. A hole was drilled into the base and top of each hand creating a space into which two rods could be inserted. One rod embedded in the column’s top surface provided stability for the arm on top of the
mount while the other was attached to the decaled mask and secured its stability on top of the forearm structure.

I experimented with alternative mediums using moulds made from both silicon rubber and fibreglass casing. Resin is highlighted in Figure 187 while Figure 185 and 186 demonstrates the use of a perlite and clay mixture as a casting medium in the mould. Following firing, copper oxide was washed into the recessed areas and refired. This technique allowed me to express the idea of imperfection into the piece titled *Monster Blondes*. The pitted surface of the arm refers to the many skin imperfections that are erased by digitalised media depictions of idealised female beauty. It is also designed to question narrow definitions of perfection when human experience demonstrates an alternative reality.

![Figure 185. Perlite and copper](image1)
![Figure 186. Detail](image2)
![Figure 187. Clear Resin Cast](image3)

![Figure 188.](image4)
![Figure 189.](image5)
![Figure 190.](image6)
![Figure 191.](image7)

Documentation of column preparation and presentation.

The Corinthian and Doric Greek columns on which the plaster forearms and decaled slabs were mounted were made from cast aluminium. After being sawn into a variety of lengths the hollow tubes needed the top surface enclosed. To resolve this problem a mixture of sand and resin was poured into a 4cm cavity inside the lining of the cylinder wall which formed a top surface. Short lengths of wooden dowel were
embedded into the 4cm deep setting resin that allowed the arms to be firmly supported when mounted. It was at this stage that the columns’ exterior surface was prepared for painting. The Doric and Corinthian mouldings stabilised the base of the plinths. They also denoted the West’s debt to the Hellenistic tradition in the shaping of the Western female body aesthetic and the application of objective concepts such as order, proportion and symmetry in formulating ideal body dimensions.

Figure 192
Live Size Body Cast

The process of making a body cast of myself was both time consuming and technically the most challenging component of the practical process. My body was initially divided into sections and each section into halves. My body was coated in
Vaseline before plaster impregnated bandage was dipped into water and placed across the partitioned sections of my body. A fine grade plaster bandage was first used to register in greater detail the surface marks and contours of my skin. This was then reinforced with a courser grade to support the lining. Approximately three to four layers were applied to increase the cast’s strength before its removal from the body.

Figure 193.  Figure 194.

The casting my body with plaster bandage.

Once the casts had set to the contours of the skin they were removed. The moulds were left to dry over a period of days before being reinforced with fibreglass and resin. This technique formed a strong, flexible but light mould. These three features were important in the success of the casting process.

Figure 195.  Figure 196.  Figure 197.

Plaster bandage casts of my arms legs and buttock
Figure 198.

Plaster bandage casts of my head and arm reinforced with fibre glass casing

The legs were initially cast in clay by lining the mould wall with a wall of clay approximately 2cm thick. Joints were made so that at each stage the next component would sit supported by the one before it. Each stage of the figure’s construction was determined by kiln dimensions. The lower legs and body were consequently made as separate units and assembled post-firing.

Figure 199.        Figure 200.

Clay wall lining leg moulds

Figure 201.

Documenting construction process.
The body which consisted of the lower torso, upper torso, arms and head were made from clay in separate components and joined together at the leather hard stage. Gauging the appropriate stage to join these components was very important. Adjusting the form by pushing outwards from the inside, while compressing from the exterior is evocative of the internal and external pressures applied to women in determining how their body should be. The meaning of the work relates to the method of construction and the particular style of the form, complimenting its particular narrative. The containment of innate potential is suggested in the method of working where a hollow form is used as opposed to a solid mass of clay. Distortions in the mould created by the fibreglass reinforcement meant the mould did not always register accurately. This resulted in lengthy remodelling to create a realistic representation of myself. Following the firing of the ceramic figure to 1100 degrees the top section was supported by ropes and hydraulically hoisted. This made for easier access to the section below and helped to level the overall form. An angle grinder removed panels from the front top legs allowing steel rods to be firmly bolted. Once the steel rods were inserted through holes prepared in the palette and bolted, the figure was facilitated to independently stand.

![Figure 202.](image)  ![Figure 203.](image)  ![Figure 204.](image)

Attaching figures legs while held up by a hydraulic hoist.

The following pieces were made early in 2003 as part of this PhD candidature and were an exploration into form and surface. The pieces were small in scale (approx 30 cm in height) and made to hang on the wall.
Figures 202 and 203 document early experiments into alternate forms, surface and style undertaken in the exploratory stages of the thesis material and the creation of a new body of work. The elongated stylised features drastically depart from the types of figures seen in Figure 201 where voluptuous rolls of middle aged white flesh combined with contented expressions remain the significant features. The following figures are useful in tracking the evolution in form and style from 2003 when these works were made to the more recent works such as Bad Hair Day and The Makeover that were completed during 2006.
The process of mould making using silicon rubber backed by a fibreglass casing extended the range of options in relation to the casting of a variety of other materials. Experiments in the casting of resin with a variety of additives were explored.
Additionally this facilitated the casting of resin, wax and plaster models. The techniques and mediums were selected because they conveyed most faithfully the aims and objectives of the concepts behind the artworks.

![Figure 209](image1.png) ![Figure 210](image2.png) ![Figure 211](image3.png)

**Figure 209**  **Figure 210**  **Figure 211**

**Figure 212.**  **Figure 213.**

Casting of clay model using silicon rubber, resin and fibre glass.

Exploration in a range of mediums including film recording and editing, wax casting, silicon rubber mould making, resin casting, decal design and application, plaster and mixed media all contributed to the creation of a body of work produced for this thesis. I acquired and developed sufficient audio visual digital recording skills to incorporate appropriate extracts into the exhibition. The extracts were chosen to represent the contribution of primary research and to inform the artworks in the exhibition space. These works aim to raises awareness regarding the topic of race representation and subjectivity. By working within critical analysis I have used my art work as a form of social or cultural critique to challenge socially and historically constituted power relations. Visual images are an important component of the social language and are central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness). Through my art work, therefore, I have created an alternative conversation that illustrates the privilege of certain groups over others. The work both theoretical and practical illustrates the oppression that characterises this privilege in relation to the female body and female body ideals. It documents how contemporary societies subordinate the non-Caucasian female by omitting them completely or highlighting their alien status. This results in many non-Caucasian women accepting
the denigration of their unique physical features as natural, necessary, or inevitable. I have demonstrated that this oppression is multifaceted and interconnected through a bias in product promotion and design. 485 The emphasis of this research on issues that cross boundaries of race and culture also positions it within a feminist framework. 486 The one-off art objects made in response to the research take issue with this bias and in conjunction with feminist concerns challenge the institutionalisation of whiteness by providing oppositional images regarding the cultural constructions of ideal female beauty, the necessity of women labelling and being labelled by consumerism and socially conditioned to conform to the Eurocentric model. The studio based research has been integral to the research project. The nature of visual arts practice in a studio environment enabled a varied research experience which enabled me to raise concerns and observations expressed by the participant interviews and for me to arrive at these exhibited items.

Conclusion

Throughout human history, conflict between people has depended on the categorisation of the social world into groups. By employing arbitrary criteria such as sex, religion, ethnicity or race, human beings were able to determine those who were included in the desired group or those excluded from it. Differentiating ‘others’ on the basis of physical characteristics and race was articulated in cultural codes of behaviour and these continue to permeate society today. These cultural values and attitudes are ultimately communicated to others through the generation of multiple cultural productions.487 The overrepresentation of images of ideal female beauty in Caucasian form is derived from a colonialist past and ideology which are so entrenched within Western culture that it appears normal to vast numbers of Australians. According to Gunther Kress,

All texts are social and cultural in origin; they draw on the existing codes in a culture that always pre-exist any one text … Cultural behaviour is so highly articulated and rule governed. An individual grows into a culture that is already fully established, has complex sets of values and classifications, sets of rules, prohibitions and permissions. To the individual these codes appear usual, normal, natural and s/he accepts them as the way the world is, as the proper picture of human nature, and as all that there can be. Having mastered the complexities of the culture, life is then conducted in the grooves provided by that culture. That is both a benefit in oiling the wheels of communication and a problem in providing the grooves in which it is to run.488

Australia’s national identity, since colonisation, has been determined along racial lines and this prejudice has permeated the social structures of its cultural systems.489 The negative impact resulting from this was highlighted in the personal recollections and experiences shared by participants and recorded throughout this thesis.

The motivation to divide the world into ‘us’ and ‘them’ has been explained in this thesis in terms of our evolutionary past, when, living as hunter-gatherers, humans became hardwired to respond to visual cues such as race as part of a survival skill. Robert Kurzban, John Tooby and Leda Cosmides suggest that because humans would not have had a geographical coverage greater than forty miles, people living within this vicinity would never have been sufficiently genetically different to constitute a separate race. When encounters with other races did occur, it was

488 Ibid.
necessary to categorise them in terms of individual and group threat, and hence race became an indicator of social alliance. The relevance of this research to the individual women from non-Caucasian backgrounds living in Australia rests on whether this innate hardwired response to culturally prescribed appearance is fixed or fluid. Restricting individual movement to a forty mile radius will no longer ensure the avoidance of ‘others’. Advances in communications, transport and technology ensure the world is now interconnected and interdependent, with individuals increasingly negotiating with others from differing racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Hobsbawm and Ranger have demonstrated how traditions are constantly being reinvented or refashioned according to contemporary needs. They believe narratives of national identity and history are created to serve the political purposes of the present. Language, Hobsbawn and Ranger assert, is one way the narrative of national identity is expressed. Since the 1990s, media monitoring surveys have found there has been an increasing use in Australia of the word ‘un-Australian’. Mention of the word ‘un-Australian’ in the public domain has increased from 68 in 1995, to 406 in 2000 and 571 in 2004. For Joseph Pugliese, an associate professor at Macquarie University, the increasing use of the word is a consequence of Australia’s failure to come to terms with its complex history. Australia’s struggle to determine a national identity from its population of twenty million inhabitants who come from a diverse range of racial and ethnic backgrounds is part of the reason for the increase in the term’s popularity, he believes. Pugliese suggests the term ‘un-Australian is usually used between people of the dominant culture to discriminate by determining those individuals who meet the socially defined criteria and excluding the ‘other.’

What’s at stake is the sense of belonging. I see it as a term used to discriminate between individuals and groups that refuse to conform to the dominant culture. I see it as a divisive term, one that’s predicated on an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality.

During the 1990s, the increasing changes in racial and ethnic demographics in Australian society left many Australians such as Pauline Hanson and her supporters

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493 Ibid.

Discrimination based upon physical appearance has become increasingly contentious in recent times. A definition of Australian identity has often been predicated on defining what is not Australian and as a result race and ethnicity has remained a feature within the narrative of national identity. According to Tim Phillips, senior lecturer in sociology at the University of Tasmania, this debate came to the fore during the 1990s during widespread public questioning around multiculturalism, Mabo and Australia becoming a republic. The Prime Minister John Howard is partly responsible for the increasing use and popularity of the word ‘un-Australian’ with media monitors finding that his comments constituted 28.2 per cent of the mentions of the word ‘un-Australian’ in major metropolitan newspapers. As we have seen from past experience, defining national identity has resulted in the exclusion of ‘others’ who appeared different. People were excluded if they were culturally different, physically different or deviated from the European ideal. Contemporary social discourse appears to be following a similar path if the increased usage of the word ‘un-Australian’ is an indicator. At the root of the current difficulties as outlined throughout this thesis, is the belief that prejudice is intrinsic to human nature and therefore not eradicable. When such as view is entrenched it is followed by a paralysing apathy or resignation to the status quo.

However, encouraging new research suggests prejudices are not fixed and the individual can play an active role in countering their influence. According to Margo Monteith, PhD and associate professor of psychology at the University of Kentucky,
people are more likely to confuse the identity of two black individuals or two white ones, rather than a white with a black.\textsuperscript{497} Further research by Cosmides, Tooby and Kurzban was undertaken in an effort to ascertain whether this was innate or a by-product of society categorising according to race. Cosmides and her co-researchers filmed a conversation between two basketball teams. Each team was comprised of players from a diversity of races. As reported at the \textit{American Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences}, Cosmides and her team discovered that subjects were more likely to confuse two players on the same team, regardless of race, rather than two players of the same race on opposite teams.\textsuperscript{498} This experiment points to one way of ameliorating racism. By changing the way society organises groups and by replacing one system of alliance with a greater loyalty, a racist construct may be altered.

The research by Cosmides’ team suggests that by taking small measures such as racially integrating basketball teams, mental divisions can be reset thereby reducing the importance of race and ethnicity. Cosmides suggests,

\begin{quote}

The results show that despite a lifetime’s experience of race as a social predictor of social alliance, less than 4 minutes of exposure to an alternate social world was enough to deflate the tendency to categorize by race. These results suggest that racism may be a volatile and eradicable construct that persists only so long at it is actively maintained through being linked to parallel systems of social alliance.\textsuperscript{499}
\end{quote}

Through a series of tests, Monteith also found that, when it was established people were prejudiced, they had the power to correct this. Monteith found the worse a subject felt about their performance in prejudice revealing tests, the better they scored on subsequent assessments.\textsuperscript{500} The research by Cosmides and Monteith demonstrates that racism is a construct which is capable of movement and alteration. Her research suggests a way in which change might be achieved by allying mixed groups with a higher loyalty. A broader definition of what it means to be Australian could act as a rallying point to unify loyalties.

\textsuperscript{498} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{499} Ibid.
In this thesis I have constructed a theoretical framework in which I examined the relationship between societal influences on the female body shape, non-Caucasian female responses to societal ideals and the resultant dysfunction that can occur when the ideal that is promoted is unattainable. In society today, these ideals are now being determined by organisations that produce and market beauty products by employing image-makers to service their commercial ends. The physical ideals being advertised are predominantly Western/Caucasian and are unattainable for many women in the world. The unattainability of these ideals has resulted in an increase in extreme forms of behaviour such as the removal of distinguishing racial characteristics through cosmetic surgery. Support for aspects of this research was provided through interviews with women of diverse racial backgrounds living in Australia. This study highlighted the important role that media images of beauty play in the formation of female identity and the inherent social and moral problems that can eventuate. In conjunction with the ‘colonial mentality’ still prevalent in postcolonial countries, participant comments revealed attitudes are brought to Australia from home countries that reinforce the institutionalisation of Eurocentric perspectives and power. Migrants discover impressions regarding the ideals of appearance from a variety of sources.

This does not mean the situation has to continue in the same way for non-Caucasian women living in Australia. Positive new research by Dove has resulted in a campaign designed to ignite the debate in relation to the current narrow definitions of beauty. In 2006, a research paper involving ten countries was commissioned by Dove to explore self esteem and the impact of beauty ideals on the lives of women and girls. Titled Beyond Stereotypes the study surveyed 3,300 girls and women between the ages of 15 and 64 in Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. (Australia was not included.) The results showed only ten in a hundred women say they are free of concern about their body weight and shape. As a result of these disturbing findings Dove embarked on a campaign aimed at stimulating debate and offering images that opposed the usual stereotyped media images of beauty. These images have been widely distributed throughout many parts of the world. On large

502 Ibid.
Conclusion

bill boards and full page spreads in women’s magazines such as *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan* the images have included women of diverse physical features, ages and body shapes. Not only do they reject the supermodel ethos of the advertising industry but they show ordinary women who are represented as attractive despite possessing many of the physical traits perceived to be unattractive such as freckles, grey hair, small breasts and wrinkles. The women are also multi racial, confident and happy with their own bodies. While its function as a cosmetics advertisement continues to play off our cultural obsession with women’s bodies and promote a product that claims to ‘firm’ those bodies it remains a revolutionary campaign. Dove’s efforts may indicate the early stages of a change in collective consciousness and herald a new beginning aimed at cherishing the diverse and real rather than a monocultural ideal.

![Figure 214](http://images.google.com.au/images_dove_campaign. Accessed 27/08.06.)

![Figure 215](http://image.space.rakuten.co.jp/lg01/48/0000015348/82/img38eb21482m91lc.jpeg. Accessed 27/08.06.)

![Figure 215](http://www.jakobieta.pl/uploads/RTEmagicC_image1-01_02.jpg.jpg. Accessed 27/08.06.)
The data presented in this thesis demonstrates that women’s concern about their bodies is no trivial matter. The research has revealed these concerns to be damaging to women’s sense of self worth and having serious implications for their participation in everyday life. Susie Orbach states the results of the Dove campaign revealed seven out of 10 girls refrained from many everyday life activities when they felt bad about how they looked. This extended to withdrawal and disengagement from crucial acts of daily life such as turning up for work, attending a job interview or going to the doctor. Women who feel good about themselves participate more widely in social affairs, are positive and productive. They make better mothers, daughters, wives, employees. The importance of these positive feelings therefore cannot be underestimated. The penetration and transmission of the European female body ideal among women from non-European backgrounds living in Australia has eroded a belief in the value of their unique features. Building a social fabric supportive of Australia’s multicultural population demands that we work towards a beauty culture that recognises all individuals’ worth and uniqueness.

My artwork is one way of contributing to the discourse that challenges the rhetoric which constantly inscribes whiteness. By locating my work within a fine art context

508 Ibid. p. 27.
Conclusion

I am interested in creating an alternate forum from which to discuss the issues raised throughout this thesis. My work questions the representations characterising both Europeans and non-European women and offers an opportunity to consider how they are imposed and whose interests they serve. Artists have a role to play in raising consciousness in relation to these cultural and social issues and in promoting images which reflect a realistic spectrum of female forms and racial characteristics. In this way images that are attainable and desirable from a health perspective, can be promoted to provide some balance to the distorted reality that is projected by the media image-makers. The narrow range of body stereotypes promoted by the media must be challenged, and artists can play (and have played) an important role in subverting these unhealthy stereotypes. I believe an examination of the ways in which differences are constructed forces us to question assumptions about our own culture, its arts, sciences and ethics. It offers critical insights into the way in which we “make our lives or the way in which our lives are made for us”.\textsuperscript{509} By examining cultural attitudes towards race via cultural representations this thesis offers insights into how our categories of sameness and difference have come into being. This questioning has highlighted how the assumptions and values which comprise our identities are shaped by larger social and institutional systems and opens up greater opportunities for conversation about how to find a different, more equable way of life. By confronting my own subjectivity first, I can proceed into the future armed with information and empathy. Furthermore I hope to offer a model for further self examination and analysis.

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APPENDIX

1. QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION.

2. INFORMATION RE RESEARCH PROJECT FOR NON WHITE WOMEN LIVING IN AUSTRALIA.

3. ETHICS APPLICATION FORM.

4. CONSENT FORM.

5. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: In Iran, search for beauty leads to nose job.

6. PHOTOGRAPHIC EXAMPLES OF PHD WORKS.
Questions for Focus Group Discussion

Student Researcher: Ruth Park (02) 66287923 Research Supervisor: Rebecca Coyle (02) 66203905

Women from different racial and cultural backgrounds are invited to participate in a research project which is trying to assess the influence of the Western Female Body Ideals on Non Caucasian women living in Australia. The Student Researcher of this project is Ruth Park, (PhD candidate) under the guidance of Research Supervisor Rebecca Coyle, (Lecturer, School of Arts, Southern Cross University Lismore). The project seeks feedback from women from non-Caucasian backgrounds living in Australia about their perception of the ideal female body. Its purpose is to understand to what extent Western notions of beauty have impacted on these women’s own perceptions of beauty. Information for this project will be obtained through the participants verbal responses to the questions listed below. Women who agree to participate will gather informally as a group and through discussion, share their views on this topic. This exchange will be recorded on video or audiotape. Your participation would be greatly appreciated and would assist in furthering our current understanding in this area.

1. Are you in the age range of 21 to 30 31 to 40 41 to 50 51 to 60 61 to 70.

2. What is your cultural/ethnic background?

3. In what country were you born?

4. Have you lived in another country other than Australia and the country of birth? If so what country was this and how long were you there?

5. How long have you lived in Australia?

6. Describe the looks/physical features, which were in previous centuries, considered the most desirable for your particular cultural group?

7. How much do you think these ideals have changed and over what period?

8. Describe the features which you consider to be the most attractive to “your” cultural group.

9. Have your attitudes towards how you look changed over time? If so, how?

10. What looks would you most like to change about yourself and why? For example weight, skin colour, eye shape, nose shape or bridge, bone structure, mouth or lips, face shape, hair colour or texture, height etc

11. How conscious are you of looking different from the other cultural groups in Australia?

12. Do you know other women who have changed their physical features or appearance in one-way or another? How have they done that? I.e. surgically, dieting, chemically etc

13. How are women from your cultural group shown in the pictures of beauty magazines, television and movies? How does this make you feel?

14. Do you compare yourself to the pictures of beautiful women you see in magazines and television? If you do, how does this make you feel?
APPENDIX 2
SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION ABOUT A RESEARCH PROJECT

The Influence of Western Female Body Ideals on Non-European Women living in Australia.

Student Researcher:
Ruth Park - The School of Art, Southern Cross University
(02) 66287923

Research Supervisor:
Dr Rebecca Coyle - The School Of Arts, Southern Cross University
(02) 66203905

Calling Non-European women aged over 18 years old living in Australia.

I am writing to your organization to invite participation in a research project by women from your organization who may be interested to further our understanding into the effects of the Western Female Body Ideal on Non-European women living in Australia. The project is investigating how the stereotypical perceptions of Western Female Beauty impacts on the body ideals of non-European women in Australia. There has been very little research carried out in this area and your participation could make a valuable contribution to expanding our current knowledge on this topic.

Ruth Park is the Student Researcher conducting this study. Ruth is a Doctor of Philosophy candidate at the Southern Cross University in Lismore and Dr Rebecca Coyle, a Lecturer at the School of Arts, is the Research Supervisor of this study. Contact details are listed above.

The project seeks feedback from non-European women living in Australia as to their perceptions of the ideal female body. The aim is to ascertain to what extent the dominant culture’s promotion of a racially specific female stereotype based on unquestioned aesthetic ideas, has impacted on the participants notions of beauty. By analysing responses to the questions relating to ethnic identity and adherence to Western stereotypes, this research hopes to provide insight into the experience of marginalised groups.

It is hoped details of this study and its request for participants may be included in your organizations newsletter or be verbally conveyed at a members gathering. I would be pleased to address a public meeting or gathering of your members in order to convey information about this project. Additionally I would be happy to prepare copies of the relevant details to be
included in a mail out you may hold. Any costs incurred in the postage of this type of information distribution would be incurred at my expense.

Those who agree to participate would be invited to take part in a group discussion. The discussion is expected to take approximately 60 minutes depending on the number of participants. Numbers of participants will range from between 5-9 participants in the mixed cultural groups and 2-4 participants in the ethnically similar groups. During the discussion participants would be invited to respond to a series of questions. Ruth would like to film the discussion on a video recorder. The location for this discussion would be determined by a general consensus amongst the participants.

For the purposes of the Doctor Of Philosophy Degree, Ruth will make a number of art works which will explore many of the issues associated with the Western Female Body Ideal and its impact on the experience of women from non-European backgrounds living in Australia. The aim of these works is to illustrate that beauty goes beyond the superficial stereotypes and that aesthetic ideals imposed by any dominant culture can be unhealthy and problematic to marginal groups.

These works will be exhibited for assessment at the School of Fine Art Gallery at the Southern Cross University in 2007. During the exhibition sections from the filmed responses to the questionnaire will be played as part of the visual display if the participants agree. The visual material attempts to engage the viewer with the research subject and stimulate questioning on how, what and why many people have certain attitudes in relation to the ideal female body form. A written paper will be presented as a component of the research project. Details from the filmed interview may also be included in the written paper. The research paper will function as a support document to the exhibition work.

Participants will be requested to permit information and ideas gained during the interview to be used again for future presentations, research studies, and discussion forums.

If women from your organization agree to participate in the project, they will be able to review, edit or erase the filmed tape recording of the interview with Ruth. They may withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and information associated with you will be destroyed or returned to you. The researchers will endeavour to keep the identity of the participants confidential by not using the names of participants in any presentation of the research. However, this cannot be guaranteed, as it is possible that where filmed interviews are used in the exhibition, someone may recognise them or their voice.
In summary, their contribution is invited in the following way:

1. Take part in a group discussion and respond to some direct questions. (See questions on the attached sheet)
2. Give permission for their contribution to be videotaped.
3. Allow extracts of the video to be used in the associated exhibition.
4. Allow information and ideas gained during the interview to be used again for future presentations, research studies, and discussion forums.

Please contact Ruth on 66287923 if you would like more information about the project. If there are women interested in participating in this research project please complete and return the consent form in the enclosed reply-paid envelope to:

Ruth Park, C/O School of Arts, Southern Cross University, Lismore NSW 2480.
Ruth will then contact you to arrange a meeting.

Thankyou
Ruth Park (Student Researcher) .....................
Dr Rebecca Coyle (Research Supervisor) ...............
SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC)

APPLICATION FORM
PROPOSED PROJECT INVOLVING RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

INITIAL APPLICATION for approval for **ONE** year.

A. ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

1. **Name Of Project:** The Western Female Body Ideal; Its Impact on the Body Ideals of Non-Caucasian Women Residing in Australia.

2. **Person Responsible:** (this should be a member of the full-time staff of the University or a person associated with the University for the purposes of research and includes supervisors of postgraduate students)

   Name: Dr Rebecca Coyle
   Position: Lecturer
   School: The School Of Arts
   Southern Cross University telephone extension no: 3905
   Email address: recoyle@scu.edu.au

3. **Associates – status and relevant expertise:** (eg For status - undergraduates, honours and postgraduate students)

   Name and School: Ruth Park
   Phone No: 66287923
   Email address: parkreka@optusnet.com.au

4. **Technicians and/or other research personnel associated with the research.** (with details of relevant expertise where necessary):

   Name and School: NA
   Email address:

5. **Have you received or applied for external funding or sponsorship for this research?**

   **YES**
   **NO**

   Please include details of any “in kind” contributions.
   Please refer to Page 12, point 1.10 in the National Statement which refers to “inducements”.

   If yes, state the name of the organisation and the funding/sponsorship/in-kind contribution details.

5a **Are there any restrictions on publication of the results of the research?**

   **YES**
   **NO X**

5b **Indicate the $ amount of external funding/sponsorship:**

6. **Proposed date of commencement: December 2003**

7. **Estimated finishing date: January 2007**

8. **Have you sought ethics approval for this project before?**

   **YES**
   **NO X**

   If YES, what was the result? Please attach a copy of the approval.

9. **Is this project currently before another ethics committee?**

   **YES**
B. PROJECT DETAILS

10. Aim or purpose of the research: Examine the effects of the Western Female Body Ideals on Non Caucasian Women living in Australia.

11. Intended number of participants: 50-70

12. Source of participants:
Please give details of how the participants are to be recruited/selected. Please refer to Page 12, Point 1.10 in the National Statement which refers to “Inducements”.

Contact with participants will be sought through existing formal organizations whose membership and affiliations are racially based.

For example, the Philippine Association. A letter will be forwarded to the contact person for the organization inviting participation and explaining the aims of the research project.

Phase one will consist of compiling a register of participants who are willing to participate.

Phase two will involve filming interviews with respondents about their particular histories and views. Participants will respond to a number of questions which will act as prompts to the discussion. “See Attached List Of Questions.”

13. Age range of participants: Over 18

14. Sex of participants: Female

15. Research methodology

Some research processes are deliberately unstructured — they develop gradually as knowledge of the research situation grows. This is particularly true of action research and similar unstructured research methods which are intended to research change processes at the same time as to plan for and implement change.

Such unstructured methods typically begin with tentative ideas about research questions, sample size and nature, data collection and analysis methods, and the like.

If you are conducting such research, you may have to describe not the sample, research question, process and the like. You may instead do better to describe the manner in which you will develop these details. You may also find it useful to provide some reasons for taking this approach.

Please provide a detailed research plan including: (e.g. blood samples, interviews, surveys etc); and research methods. All applicants need to provide a plan regardless of whether the research is structured or not.

Attach a research plan if there is not enough space on this form.

50 –70 women will be invited to participate in a survey by a representative from their community.

The research will take the form of focus group discussions.

The groups will respond initially to a set of prompting questions (see attached) and the resulting discussion will be recorded by video at a location acceptable to all participants.

The participants' responses will indicate their perceptions of ideal female body characteristics. These characteristics will be compared to the Caucasian ideal and previous ideals associated with the participants' racial heritage.

The discussion will also indicate the participants' attitude and feelings towards their own racial features and the perceived attractiveness of these features.

The responses will be taped and may be edited. The selected material will be played as audio/visual support material for the assessment exhibition.

Final assessment for the PhD includes both studio and written components. The written component including information gathered from the survey constitutes support material for a number of sculptures that explore many issues covered in the
research document. The interviews will convey additional information to the exhibition audience and relates the research component more directly to the artistic endeavour.

Information from the filmed and taped interviews will also be included in the research document as support material to the broader study.

See Methodology 2.2 in PhD Proposal which is attached or Extract Below.

It is proposed that six qualitative focus groups will provide the framework for the study. The composition of the first two groups will be racially diverse. The second two groups will be racially specific. One group will be of Middle Eastern origin and the other Pacific Islanders. Each racially specific group will be requested to respond to material provided at the gathering. For the group made up of women of Middle Eastern origin this will be an article that reports on the removal of racially specific features by plastic surgery and its application to their specific racial group. 1 For the women of Pacific Islander descent the article will discuss the influence of the media on traditional body ideals. 2 The third two groups will be racially diverse however each group will be invited to respond to one nominated body component. For example the nose will form the subject of one focus group and skin colour the other. Information collated from the six qualitative focus groups will provide data indicating the effects and degree non-Caucasian women in Australia are being affected by the dominance of the Western female body.

This research seeks to contribute to our current understanding by identifying the broader consequences involved when a one race’s female body ideal is promoted at the expense of others. It will place the experience of these women into a global context by exploring this topic through the context of continuing globalisation, politics, power and gender, capitalism and the role of imagery in the media.

A body of artwork will be presented in a final exhibition. The artwork displayed will be the result of translating the issues raised throughout the theoretical research into a visual format. Ceramic sculptures and charcoal drawings will comment on the ethical dilemmas raised and inform the viewer as to the effects on different races when one culture’s female body ideal dominates others. Large-scale ceramic sculptures presented in the classical aesthetic will be positioned around the central area of the exhibition floor space. These works will emulate the stylistic features of antiquity only they will be usurped by the obvious racial identity many of the figures now possess. The reference to Western civilisations aesthetic and cultural debt to this period will provide the vehicle for illustrating the over riding influence it exudes over others. However the initial encounter of a traditional museum type exhibit will also be usurped by the integration of electronic media devices. Through the use of recorded sound and video imaging the spectator will again be challenged away from the familiar museum and classical aesthetic to the more contemporary installation exhibit. The recorded conversations of various participants will be heard from numerous positions within the exhibition space. As the spectator approaches a sculptural exhibit presented in the traditional context the viewer will trigger a sensory device, which will activate the sound and projected images. The sound systems themselves will be hidden from view. The viewer will be able to move around the exhibition space as a voyeur, ears drooping on highly personal conversations. The conversation will phase in and out as they move towards and away from the projection source. The video images of the taped interviews will be projected around the exhibition space onto the walls. Close ups of an eye blinking or a mouth moving, a nose breathing for example will be enlarged to dominate wide areas of gallery wall space. These projected features will be racial characteristics, which various races find popular to remove or alter through cosmetic surgery.

This study will contribute to existing research by examining the effects of the Western female body ideal on non-Caucasian women residing in Australia. These national findings, when combined with similar studies undertaken in other countries, will provide a framework in which to identify and measure influences on an international scale. As an artist I will explore the interface of these issues. By combining the traditional and historical with contemporary electronic forms of expression and representation, the findings will be communicated through the visual form and presented to the broader community. The arts have often been a litmus test in the past responding to the undercurrents of social change. This research and subsequent artwork will be addressing some of the important but often-unacknowledged influences of globalisation on the female body ideals and body image of women from other races residing in Australia. By taking these issues to the community via the exhibition a greater awareness and sensitivity to the experience of others will hopefully result.

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16. Does the researcher intend to use a questionnaire? 

YES

NO X

If YES, attach a sample to this proposal and detail below how confidentiality will be assured.

C. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

17. Does the research involve any of the activities which fall within the ambit of Section 3A of the Southern Cross University Guidelines/Rules?

YES

NO

If YES, what is the nature of the activity?

The researcher will ensure that:

- The identity of the participant is safeguarded to the best of the researcher's ability.
- The participant is made aware of the risk of identification from those who view the exhibition work.
- Written consent is obtained from the participants indicating their willingness to participate in the filmed/taped discussion.
- Written consent is obtained from the participants indicating their consent to taped material being used in the exhibition.
- Written consent is obtained from the participants indicating their consent to taped material to be used in the written research documentation.
- Written consent is obtained from the participants indicating their consent for taped material to be used for an appropriate future occasion.
- The wordings to the prompting questions for the group discussion are tactfully and sensitively written.
- Aims and objectives are clearly explained to participants prior to participation.
- Participants are informed of their rights to withdraw consent.
- The focus group discussion does not lead towards a biased response from the participant.
- The interview is sensitive to the participant who may be divulging personal and sensitive information.
- Should any participant become emotional because of associated personal issues, this discussion may inadvertently raise, then they will be referred to a qualified Counsellor for help. Contact details will be noted on the consent form.
- In addition any information revealed of an illegal nature will be forwarded to the appropriate authorities.

The final results will be stored and made accessible through the University Records. The researcher will maintain a copy of the taped/filmed discussions and research paper. Participants may access these through the Southern Cross Records Department or by contacting the Researcher, Ruth Park.

18. Does the research involve any other institution (such as a hospital)?

YES

NO X

If YES, what is the name of the institution and does the institution require ethical approval from its own ethics committee?

YES

NO

Name of institution: NA

If YES, has that approval been obtained?

YES

NO

19. Is the research on Indigenous Australians or other Indigenous peoples (individuals, groups or communities)?

YES X

NO

If YES, detail below what measures you will take to address the ethical considerations raised in Section 6 of the Southern Cross University Guidelines/Rules. A copy of the document entitled "Ethics in Aboriginal Research" is available from the Graduate Research College and is available at

Women of Aboriginal background who agree to participate in the focus group discussion will take part as one of a number of women from different racial backgrounds. The objectives will be clearly explained both verbally and in writing so the participant fully understands the nature of the project. Women through the focus group discussion will share their experiences of living in a dominant culture and how this has made them feel in relation to their own, races physical attractiveness. The value to the individual participant is to hear the experiences of women from other races, to better understand the influences which impact on them and to empower them to appreciate the diversity which exists among us. This research assesses the individual and community aspirations to take pride in a unique identity. (This
includes the physical identity as well as the cultural. The individual participant will determine the extent to which they wish to contribute to the discussion.

20. Does the research involve any of the activities identified in 3C of the Guidelines? YES NO

If YES, what is the nature of the activity? ...........................................................................................................

21. If your research participants are under the age of 18 years, have you complied with the appropriate Child Protection Legislation? YES NO

22. Will the research require personal information to be disclosed by a third party? Is a database being accessed? YES NO X

Guidelines approved under Section 95A of the Privacy Act 1988 are available at:

23. Does your research have legal implication with respect to:
   (a) Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) YES NO X
   (b) Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 (Cth) YES NO X
   (c) Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) YES NO X
   (d) Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 YES NO X

24. How will the researchers address the requirements under section 7 of the Guidelines? (Informed Consent)

Letter 1 (attached) will be distributed to all participants in Phase 1
Letter 2 & 3 (attached) will be distributed in Phase 2...........................................................................

25. Indicate any potential risk (emotional, physical, economic, privacy, legal) you can envisage for the participants and the safety precautions which may need to be taken. This information will be sent to the University Risk Manager for transmission to the University’s insurers.

Questioning will be limited to what participants are willing to have on the public record. Any sensitive or potentially damaging information will not be recorded or edited. Any request for confidentiality will be respected. The discussion may inadvertently raise sensitive information. Should any participant become emotional because of associated personal issues, they will be referred to seek help from a qualified Councillor. Contact details will be noted on the consent form for the participants’ referral.

In addition, participants need to be made aware that should anyone reveal any information of an illegal nature, this information will be forwarded to the appropriate authorities. These details will also be included on the consent form informing participants of the consequences should this occur.

Only those women who have a reasonable command of English will participate in the focus group discussions. To avoid offending anyone who may wish to participate but whose English is inadequate, a clause will be included into the consent form listing it as a prerequisite.

26. A copy of the informed consent form to be signed by participants is attached. YES X NO

Please note that a copy of the consent form must be attached before the application will be considered.

27. Certification that the project is of a satisfactory standard by the Head of School. Where the applicant is Head of School this section should be completed by the Director of Postgraduate Studies and Research:

Name of Head of School (please type): ........................................................................................................
Signature of Head of School: ................................................................. Date: .................................................................

School/Centre: .........................................................................................

28. Comments (if thought necessary) by the above signatory about the academic rigour of the project, especially in regard to the research methods to be used:

...........................................................................................................

.................................................................

29. Certification:

I, the person responsible (usually the Supervisor), certify that the proposed research will conform with:
- the general principles set out in the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans or with the principles of:

...........................................................................................................

AND

Southern Cross University’s research ethics standards.

Name of Person Responsible/Supervisor (please type): Dr Rebecca Coyle .................................................................

Position: Lecturer - School of Arts .................................................................

Signature of Person Responsible/Supervisor: ................................................................. Date: .................................................................

In signing, I acknowledge that failure to complete all details of the form may lead to delays which I am therefore responsible for.

Name of main Associate/Student (please type): Ms Ruth Park .................................................................

Signature of Associate/Student: ................................................................. Date: 4.12.03 .................................................................

30. Please complete the checklist to ensure you have correctly finalised the Ethics application form. Submit this checklist with your application.
CONSENT FORM

The Western Female Body Ideal: Its Impact on the Body Ideals of Non-European Women Residing in Australia

Consent:

1. I agree to participate in the interview which will be recorded on film. I understand that I can listen to, edit or erase my section of the tape if I wish.

2. To allow excerpts from the recordings to be used as part of the exhibition. I understand that my name and picture will be used in the final PhD thesis as well as in the exhibition.

3. To permit this material to be used on similar or related occasions, provided other identifying material is not used.

Name (Print Please) ........................................
Signature ..................................................
Date .................................

Please provide your address and/or phone number so that Ruth Park can contact you to arrange a convenient venue and time for the discussion.

Address ......................................................
Telephone .............................................

Please return this Consent Form in the enclosed envelope to
Ruth Park
C/O School of Art,
Southern Cross University,
Lismore 2480

Thank you for participating in this study.
In Iran, search for beauty leads to the nose job

- Only permitted to expose their faces and hands because of Islamic law, young Iranian women flock to plastic surgeons in latest trend.

Scott Peterson

TEHRAN, IRAN

What is the hottest fashion accessory in Iran today? A nose job, judging by the increasing number of young women here whose noses are graced by gauze bandages and tape.

Plastic surgery to lift droops, smooth bumps, and taper the distinguishably long Persian nose has become as popular in Iran as the youth-driven reform movement. In a nation where required Islamic dress code allows exposure of only a woman's face and hands, Iranians cite many reasons for the trend, including a long-standing desire for facial beauty that these days is coinciding with a youth-driven political reopening toward the West.

For more than 20 years, strict social rules have required modest dress and covered hair. Even today, lipstick is frowned upon in conservatives circles to give undisputed priority to spiritual aspects of daily life.

But nose procedures have "become an obsession for young Iranians," says Elahe Shirali, a teenager who sports bright red lipstick beneath her bandaged nose. "It's such a trend that even if people don't get a nose job, they will wear tape for the attention it brings."

"It's very difficult in Iran, because people are so sensitive to noses," says Shahnez Ganji, Miss Shirali's mother. "People will come up to you on the street and make fun of your nose as you walk by."

The standard is high, even for Iranian women who assert that

they are among the most beautiful on earth. Facial beauty has been lyricized for centuries by love poetry, and men commonly address women as *khoshgelam*, or "my pretty one." Some misguided youths even invoke Islam's tenet that "God is beautiful, and loves beautiful people."

No official statistics exist, but a leading surgeon says the 100 or so nose specialists in Iran perform 35,000 procedures per year. Qualified rhinoplastic surgeons charge about $1,000 per job. That demand is not limited to the wealthy, since newer doctors charge one-third that price.

"The concept of beauty differs in every nation and culture," says Siavash Safavi, a plastic surgeon who specializes in rhinoplasty, sitting in an office hung with Picasso prints that portray duplicate and misshapen noses of every sort. "Most of my patients desire to change their nose from the age of 12, and wait four years until they are 16. The result can be unbelievable and improves every emotion and mood. For people in poor areas, the idea is the same - sometimes I charge half price for them, if a girl needs it emotionally."

During the summer, Iranians living abroad come from Paris and the US - where such procedures are far more costly - to take advantage of local expertise honed by daily work.

"It's very particular to Iranian girls, that by adolescence a main goal is to be beautiful," Dr. Safavi says. "It's a value in our culture. There is education and everything else, but beauty is right up there, in every class."

Such a perspective might cause some to question social values that mandate surgery to improve a woman's image - questions that can as easily apply to other cultures.

But in Tehran, university student Layla Jahangari embraces the Iranian trend. With several strips of tape across her nose, she says her nose job was "totally cosmetic. I was beautiful, but really wanted to change the way I looked. I just did it for myself."

Miss Jahangari explains that the impulse toward such "improvement" has filtered down to intermediate schools - a trend she doesn't approve of - where even the youngest girls have begun to wear makeup. Still, she worked hard to convince her parents that "she wanted it so much" that it "was affecting my mind," before they relented. "You shouldn't think of it as a fashion accessory. A lot of Iranian women have a problem with their nose, and reserve a right to get it done."

As natural as Jahangari may speak about re-fitting her nose, there are signs that its use in drawing members of the opposite sex in Iran - at least in public - is limited. As she speaks, the mall loudspeaker reminds women to attend to their *hijab*, or hair covering, to ensure full compliance with the rules. Outside the main gate, a police van has picked up a young, unmarried couple: She sits forlornly at the back, while he sits separately near the front.
"Among my friends, those who can have a nose job do it, and those who can't all want to do it," says Jahangari, extending well-manicured hands toward a pay phone, to surprise her boyfriend with the news that her nose cast is finally off.

But is it required? she is asked. "Yes, you must have it in Iran today."
APPENDIX 6
Photographic Documentation

Artworks by Ruth Park.
2003-2007


2. *The Cloud Catcher*. Ceramic. 1100 degrees. 1 metre w x 30cm d x 45cm h.


4. *Bad Hair Day*. 1 metre w x 2 metres high x 70cm d. Constructed with coils, pinch, slab and modelling techniques. Mixed media / ceramic and wire.

5. *In My Mind*. 84cm h x 50cm w x 50 cm d. Hand built Ceramic. 1100.


9. *Twisted*. 200cm h x 120cm w x 80cm d. Hand built Ceramics. 1100. Airdried enamel surface.


11. *Having My Cake and Eating It To*. 45cm w x 45cmw x 45 cm h. hand built and modelled. Paper clay. 1100. Underglaze surface.

12. *Wash and Ware*. 200cm h x 120cm w x 60cm d. Hand built Ceramics. Mixed Media air dried enamel surface.


17. *Installation*, Ruth Park, 2006


But there is all these terms that people when they come to the hospital when they say, "Oh, how is the child?" They won't say, 'Is he healthy and all that?' They'll say, 'Oh, he's a red child, or he's a white child or he's a blue child, you know, and this is an important thing because it puts you in your social acceptance. So you can have a red child which is usually brownish in colour or you can have a black child which is a very dark child or you can have a white child which is usually what you're hoping for. But there are all these terms when they come into hospital when they'll say, 'Oh, he's a red child or he's a white child or he's a blue child, you know..." Or, "How is the child?" You know, it's so important that thing fits into in the social scale or whatever. Do you want to have a red... a red child which is usually a brownish colour or you can have a black child which is a very dark child or you will have a child which is usually what you're hoping for. But there are all these terms that people when they come to the hospital when they'll say, 'Oh, he's a red child or he's a white child or he's a black child, they won't say, 'Is he healthy and all that?' Because you know this is so important that thing fits into in the social scale or whatever. Do you want to have a red...