

COLORING THE NARRATIVE

How to Use Storytelling to Create Social Change in Skin Tone Ideals

Teaching Case by Eric Weinberger for the
Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders
www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped

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Introduction

This teaching note provides teachers with the information and guidance needed to adopt this case in your classroom. The teaching note covers background material on the case narrative, including synopsis, explanation of its real-world basis, teaching objectives, target audience, and a list of case materials and required readings for students. It also includes a detailed lesson plan and brief PowerPoint mini-lecture presentation for the teacher designed with a 1-hour and 50-minute session in mind. Of course, teachers can modify the lesson plan to accommodate a class period of a different length. At the end of this teaching note are a written homework assignment and in-class assignment instructions. The written homework assignment should be given to students along with the required reading one week before the class session in which the case will be discussed. The instructions for the in-class assignment should be handed out to students in class at the time the activity will begin after the class discussion of this case.

A. Synopsis

In the teaching case “Coloring the Narrative: How to Use Storytelling to Create Social Change in Skin Tone Ideals,” two immigrants from different continents are arriving in Hamilton, capital of the fictitious U.S. state of Columbia, and one issue on their minds is the shade of their skin color. For as long as they can remember—like millions of others in their home countries of Nigeria and Thailand, and true for many other countries besides—the message for all genders, but particularly felt by women, is that the lighter their skin, the better their prospects: More likely they will be taken to be affluent, powerful, educated, socially elevated, and just plain “beautiful,” or desirable, with the “help” of creams and soaps that lighten their dark skin. This is the message of the relentless and aggressive advertising they have grown up with and that goes back still farther to an unresolved racist legacy of colonialism, where lighter-skinned locals were cast as closer to those at the top of the pile: namely, white Europeans.

In the U.S. and other Western countries, the phenomenon of “colorism” is now fairly well understood but far less so is the problem of skin lightening (really, it’s “skin bleaching”), and the

health risks that consumers assume with these products and their dangerous chemical contents. For immigrants like our teaching case protagonists Rebecca Obafemi (from Nigeria) and Piti Bunyasarn (from Thailand), who have used these products most of their lives, the confusion and stress are significant. In Rebecca's case, the African-born pastor of her church is outspoken against skin lightening, drawing more and more support within his congregation; while her husband and two Americanized sons have long made their opposition known.

Rebecca's sons are members of the pastor's youth group that is busy with a "healthy living" project that will soon come to encompass skin lightening. Visited by two health communications professionals from outside the community, the children will learn, partly by accident and partly by practice, storytelling methods in service of a larger public health strategy that they hope will start to make a difference in many lives among their families and within their community.

(NOTE: In this Teaching Note, we use the terms "skin lightening" and "skin bleaching" interchangeably to describe the practice of using cosmetic products to lighten one's skin.)

B. Real-World Basis

On the surface, the widespread use of skin-lightening soaps, creams, and serums may seem like a matter of personal choice and aesthetics, but the practice is connected to a dominant and global social discourse on skin tone dissatisfaction, colorism, and issues of corporate irresponsibility (Craddock, 2016). Many of the men and women who use skin-lightening products live in societies where the practice is normalized as a means of achieving global beauty standards. Countries where more than one-quarter of women report using skin-lightening products include Japan, Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, China, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and India (WHO, 2007; Cooper, 2016). As research on skin tone ideals grows more robust, the \$10 billion skin-lightening product industry is emerging as a response to and source of popular demand, which has implications for public health, corporate marketing, interpersonal relationships, and the narratives underlying them all.

Cosmetic skin-lightening products pose serious physical and mental health risks to consumers. Physical and mental health risks include cancers, kidney damage, anxiety, depression, peripheral neuropathy, scarring, skin discoloration, skin irritation, blistering, and rashes (WHO, 2007; Craddock, 2016). For these health reasons, the World Health Organization, the European Union, Ghana, Australia, Japan, the United States, and several other countries have banned (or tightly regulated) the inclusion of hazardous chemical ingredients such as mercury and hydroquinone in cosmetic skin-lightening products (Blay, 2016). Skin lightening poses an additional health risk: two important behavioral drivers of skin lightening – low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction – are also tied to disordered weight control behaviors and eating disorders, though this is an under-researched area of study. Several researchers have found that skin tone dissatisfaction is associated with poor body appreciation, negative appearance evaluation, and body dysmorphic symptoms in diverse participants, even after controlling for ethnicity, age, ethnic identity

attachment, and self-esteem (Swami et al, 2013; Buchanan, Fischer, Tokar, Yoder, 2008; Marques et al, 2011; Falconer & Neville, 2000).

Despite the legal bans and the health risks associated with the use of some skin-lightening products, it has been much tougher to counter the social messaging that tells people of color that lighter skin is better than darker skin (Cooper, 2016). In India, 61% of the dermatological market comprises skin-lightening products. In Japan, where porcelain-like skin is glamorized as beautiful and healthy, many skin-lightening products double as sunblock, moisturizer, and vitamin infusing agents (Kramer, 2012). Marketing campaigns sponsored by corporate behemoths such as Unilever (Fair & Lovely, Dove, Vaseline) and Procter & Gamble (Gillette, Olay) reinforce this messaging on billboards, television commercials, and in-store displays. Product slogans include “Perfect White: Our Dreams Can Come True” and “Better Complexions Skin Lightening Products: Ultra Whitening.” Shops and stalls in Ghana use before-and-after photos to advertise the “restorative ultrafast action whitening” of some skin-bleaching products (Cooper, 2016). Internationally recognized celebrities – male and female – have used their appeal to endorse skin-lightening products including Indian actor Shah Rukh Khan, Nigerian singer Dencia (creator of the *Whitenicious* skin-bleaching line), retired Dominican Republic baseball star Sammy Sosa, Jamaican reggae artist Vybz Kartel, and American rapper Lil Kim.

Contemporary cosmetic product developers may profit from ideas about darker skin being less beautiful, but those ideas are centuries old, entrenched in historical systems of privilege and racial hierarchy and discrimination, which have implications for the social lives of today’s consumers (Hoskins, 2014). Historically, whiteness has been associated with class, purity, and success, an ideology that has produced colorism, which Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker defined as “prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their skin color” (Craddock, 2016; Walker, 1983). Colorism can also refer to preference regarding other physical traits including hair texture, eye color, nose shape, and lip size. Intra-racial inequality by skin tone persists and has increased within communities of color throughout the world, affecting their interpersonal relationships, family dynamics and patterns of social stratification (Monk, 2014). Colorism is reproduced generationally and as a result, skin bleaching has become a deeply personal practice. A 2016 opinion-editorial in the *Huffington Post* enumerated the personal affronts experienced by a dark-skinned Indian woman who grew up believing her society’s false idea that “to be fair is pretty and to be dark is not” (Thomas, 2016). In Ghana, some government officials in charge of enforcing the 2016 national skin-bleaching product-ban publicly expressed preference for lighter skin. One Ghanaian official was reported to remark about his 3-year-old daughter: “Luckily, she’s lighter than me...” (Cooper, 2016). In the U.S., skin tone ideals have impacted attitudes as well as social outcomes within communities of color. Several studies have shown that lighter-skinned Black Americans have higher incomes, educational attainment, occupational prestige, and shorter incarceration sentences than darker-skinned Black Americans (Hersch, 2006; Branigan et al, 2013; Monk, 2014; Monk, 2014; Gyimah-Brempong & Price, 2006; Viglioni & DeFina, 2011; Burch, 2015).

Opposition to the global discourse on skin tone ideals can be found in numerous messaging campaigns sponsored by the *Dark Is Beautiful* movement (<http://womenofworth.in/dark-is-beautiful/>), the *Unfair and Lovely* movement (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35783348>), and articles from the *Mocha Girl Pit Stop* (<http://mochagirlspitstop.com/proud-of-your-melanin/>), just to name a few. Some of these advocacy efforts resulted in the removal of skin-lightening campaign ads from circulation, new corporate charitable causes (such as the Fair & Lovely Foundation), and community self-esteem campaigns.

This teaching case is a fictionalized composite of real-world experiences of individual consumers, natural beauty and anti-colorism advocates, and public health researchers who have challenged the beauty standards reinforced by the international skin-bleaching industry. The teaching case was developed through extensive background research and interviews with public health researchers and practitioners, dermatologists, skin-lightening product users, and community advocates. With realistic story elements and characters, the case allows students to step into the alliance of researchers and community members striving to use storytelling, advocacy, community organizing, and media to address the safety concerns of skin-bleaching products and the larger societal issues caused by the industry's promulgation of unrealistic beauty ideals, especially for girls and women of color. Along the way, students will learn the crucial principles and techniques they will need to use storytelling techniques to counter harmful public discourse on body image and other important public health concerns.

C. Learning Objectives and Target Audience

The learning objectives of this case include several related to the health impact of public discourse on colorism, media's role in promoting skin tone ideals, skin tone social stratification, and harmful beauty standards promoted by popular cosmetic brands. This case's learning objectives also include core competencies for communication, diversity, community resources, data synthesis, and the dissemination of information.

The **public health learning objectives** specific to preventing health risks facing product users:

- 1) Describe the public health threats associated with trends in use of skin-lightening products.
- 2) Describe how cosmetic skin-lightening corporate messaging creates media environments that reinforce body image pressures and standards of beauty for girls and young women – and increasingly, for boys and men -- and for society at large.
- 3) Identify counter-narrative strategies for disrupting dominant narratives about skin tone ideals.
- 4) Demonstrate skills in media advocacy and strategic storytelling techniques by creating a media- and storytelling-based campaign in response to the skin-bleaching discourse described in the case.

The **core competency learning objectives** based on the *Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice* (<http://www.phf.org/programs/council/Pages/default.aspx>) are as follows:

- 1) Communicates information to influence behavior and improve health (e.g., uses social marketing methods, considers behavioral theories such as the Health Belief Model or Stages of Change Model) (Communications Competency #3B6 of Council on Linkages).
- 2) Incorporates diverse perspectives in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies, programs, and services that affect the health of a community (Cultural Competency Skills #4C4 of Council on Linkages).
- 3) Explains the ways assets and resources (e.g., Boys & Girls Clubs, public libraries, hospitals, faith-based organizations, academic institutions, federal grants, fellowship programs) can be used to improve health in a community (Community Dimensions of Practice Skills #5B9 of Council on Linkages).
- 4) Synthesizes evidence from print and electronic sources to support decision-making (Public Health Science Skills #6C5 of Council on Linkages).
- 5) Selects approaches for disseminating public health data and information (e.g., social media, newspapers, newsletters, journals, town hall meetings, libraries, neighborhood gatherings) (Communication Skills #3B4, Council on Linkages)

The primary target audience for this teaching case is graduate students in public health, particularly in courses focused on community-based participatory research, gender and health, adolescent and young adult health, mental health, health communication science, racial disparities, and health policy. The case is also suitable for graduate students in other disciplines, such as community medicine, communications, cultural studies, gender studies, critical race theory, community health, women's rights, and community organizing, and for undergraduate or advanced high school students in similar courses.

D. Case Materials

The complete case consists of the teaching case narrative with cast of characters ("community members"), a teaching note, which includes a lesson plan, written homework assignment, and in-class activity instructions, a PowerPoint mini-lecture that teachers can present in class to introduce the case, plus two companion technical documents that are available at no cost via the Internet and several required scientific articles, lay articles and investigative journalism pieces.

Provided in Teaching Case Document:

- 1) Cover page, table of contents, synopsis, acknowledgments, and funding (3 pages)
- 2) Cast of characters (1 page)
- 3) Case narrative "Coloring the Narrative: How to Use Storytelling to Create Social Change in Skin Tone Ideals" (13 pages)
- 4) Appendix containing images of real-world cosmetic skin-lightening campaigns and messaging that runs counter to that imagery (3 pages)

Provided Teaching Note Document: Keep in mind that teachers can modify the lesson plan and assigned readings to accommodate a shorter or longer class period or to extend the case over two class periods to spend more time introducing key concepts about corporate social responsibility, colorism, harmful social marketing campaigns, ideal body standards, the role of storytelling in public health promotion, and other topics.

Provided PowerPoint Mini-lecture: Teachers can present this brief mini-lecture with slides in class to introduce students to key concepts related to colorism and strategic storytelling.

E. Required Reading for Students

1) Provided **case narrative** document plus **Appendix, technical documents, peer-reviewed and news articles**, and the **homework assignment** (pages 14-15 in this teaching note). Teachers should distribute the readings and homework assignment to students one week before the class session in which the case will be discussed.

2) Companion technical documents:

- VanDeCarr P (2015). *Storytelling & Social Change: A strategy guide for grantmakers*. Working Narratives. Access here: <http://workingnarratives.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Story-Guide.pdf>
 - This text is packed with real-world examples from leaders and institutions that use narratives to create social change. It is written for grantmakers but is also very useful for anyone hoping to affect change through story.
 - Please read the following pages:
 - p. 5-9 – Introduction and Introduction to Case Studies: Understand the four functions of storytelling to effect change.
 - p. 30-33 – History of Storytelling in Social Change
 - p. 16-17 – Public Narrative/ Rappaport Family Foundation
 - p. 36-37 – Evaluate: Identify where impact can be observed
- Reinsborough P and Canning D (2010). *Re: Imagining Change: How to use story-based strategy to win campaigns, build movements, and change the world*. Canada: PM Press. Access PDF here: <http://www.walkingbutterfly.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/smartMeme.RelimaginingChange.pdf>
 - This book provides a helpful framework for the process of building a story-based campaign strategy to counter dominant narratives and effect change. It also introduces readers to the steps of a narrative power analysis.
 - Please read the following pages/sections:
 - p. 3 – Story-based Strategy Campaign Model
 - p. 5-7 – Narrative Power Analysis (2.1 – 2.3)
 - p. 20-21 – Framing the Conflict

3) Required peer-reviewed articles and news articles:

- Craddock N (2016). Colour me beautiful: Examining the shades related to global skin tone ideals. *Journal of Aesthetic Nursing*, 5(6): 287-289. Access here: <http://www.magonlinelibrary.com/doi/abs/10.12968/joan.2016.5.6.287?af=R>
 - Excellent account of how skin tone ideals are perpetuated by media and societal influences and the associated outcomes for people of color
- Hoskins T (2014). Skin-whitening creams reveal the dark side of the beauty industry. *The Guardian*. Access here: <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/skin-whitening-cream-dark-side-beauty-industry>
 - Critical overview of the skin-whitening industry and the messaging about ideal body images it promotes globally
- Burch T (2015). Skin color and the criminal justice system: Beyond black-white disparities in sentencing. *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*, 12(3): 395-420.
 - This article provides an analysis of criminal corrections sentences for Black and white men in Georgia. It examines intraracial differences in sentencing among Blacks, highlighting the existence of a skin tone hierarchy in the U.S. criminal justice system.

4) Recommended Reading:

- Hochschild JL and Weaver V (2007). The skin color paradox and the American racial order. *Social Forces*, 86(2): 643-670.
- Davids LM (2015). Why it's time all African countries banned skin lightening creams. *Quartz Africa*. Access here: <http://qz.com/572707/why-its-time-all-african-countries-banned-skin-lightening-creams/>
- Thomas A (2016). I'm Indian, I'm Dark, And I Don't Care. *Huffington Post*. Access here: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/im-indian-im-dark-and-i-dont-care_us_5813829be4b096e8706964e9
- Bell LA (2010). *Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. [BOOK]
- Cook J and Lewandowsky S (2011). *The Debunking Handbook*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland. Access here: <http://sks.to/debunk>
- Wallack L (1994). Media Advocacy: A strategy for empowering people and communities. *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 15(4): 420-436. Access here: <http://www.sfu.ca/cmns/faculty/labam/425/06-fall/documents/Wallack-Strategy.pdf>

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Lesson Plan and Discussion Guide

Lesson Plan (1 hour 50 minutes)

Activity	Time Allocated
Class Discussion (20 minutes)	
Introduction to Case & Initial Discussion	2 minutes
Class Discussion	10.5 minutes
Review of Storytelling Basics & Real Skin-Bleaching Campaigns and Anti-Campaigns	5 minutes
Introduction to Storytelling Strategy Team Projects	2.5 minutes
Assignment (45 minutes)	
Step 1: Discuss Homework Ideas & Common Themes	5 minutes
Step 2: Vision & Campaign Goal-setting	5 minutes
Step 3: Identify Targets & Audiences	5 minutes
Step 4: Construct & Deconstruct the Narratives	5 minutes
Step 5: Define Use of Your Story	5 minutes
Step 6: Design Primary Campaign Narrative	5 minutes
Step 7: Define Intervention	10 minutes
Step 8: Propose an Evaluation Strategy	5 minutes
Class Discussion & Personal Reflection (45 minutes)	
Groups Report Back	25 minutes
Review of Campaigns	10 minutes
Write Your Own Story	10 minutes
Total Time	110 minutes

1. Opening Whole Class Discussion (20 minutes)

Introduction to Case and Initial Discussion (2 minutes):



In today's class, we will be focusing on our case "Coloring the Narrative: How to Use Storytelling to Create Social Change in Skin Tone Ideals" about several members of the fictional Hamilton community who each have different back stories that inform their ideas about what skin lightening means to their cultural, social, and professional lives. Your homework assignment was to choose a community member from the case whose perspective you found intriguing or provocative and think of one story-

based strategy that the community member might use to change the discourse among the larger community against the dominant narrative on skin lightening. Later, for our in-class activity, you will work in small groups with 3-5 other students.

a) Class Discussion (10.5 minutes):



Before we start the small-group work, let's dissect the case and its underlying narratives together. [**NOTE:** *Teachers should prioritize questions 2, 3, 5, 7, and 9. Ask the other questions as time allows or based on the flow of the discussion.*]

Q1: What surprised you about the readings?

Q2: As we learned in the readings, our personal stories can reveal our deepest values and inform our ideas, theories, and subsequent choices. Let's think about our own stories and from where we come. Have any of you had any personal experiences with the topic of skin lightening in your communities, families, or peer networks?

Q3: Using the premise that all power relations have a narrative dimension, let's focus on the case. Which characters or stories in the case defined the social norms about ideal skin tones? What were the underlying assumptions that supported these social norms? What institutions, people, and traditions were responsible for creating, promoting and/or reinforcing the message?

Q4: What were the conflicts in the case?

Q5: Where did you see opportunities and barriers for a story-based public health intervention?

Q6: What underlying assumptions about skin lightening need to be questioned or challenged for a story-based intervention to have success in Hamilton?

Q7: What connections do you see between skin bleaching as a public health issue and the problems of disordered eating and poor body image?

Q8: How might the difference in media advertising of skin-lightening products impact the ways in which storytelling could advance social change?

Q9: How and why do you think the media and marketers target young women?

b) Review of Storytelling Basics, Real-World Advertising Campaigns and Public Responses (5 minutes):



Thank you for that discussion. In addition to the themes explored in the case, our other readings introduced us to some background on skin bleaching, the power of storytelling for social change, new terms and real-world examples of how stories are being used creatively to market and speak against cosmetic companies that produce skin-bleaching products. Let's review.

[PRESENT SLIDE SHOW PROVIDED IN TEACHER'S AID; ANIMATION BUILT-IN] One of the strategies discussed in the VanDeCarr text was "citizen witnesses" documenting their stories through video. Let's watch this short video clip about viewers' responses to one *Fair & Lovely* marketing campaign. Keep in mind some of the themes we discussed including gender differences in marketing campaigns and underlying assumptions about skin lightening. My hope is that this video will give you some ideas for your small-group project, which we'll be working on together in class today:

- #Unfair&Lovely Social Media Campaign Embraces Darker Skin Tones (March 2016): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSdaZMWuRik>

I hope that this video and the readings gave you some ideas about alternate narratives that exist and can be used for action.

2. Strategy Planning In-Class Team Assignment

- a) **Introduction to Storytelling Strategy Team Projects (2.5 minutes):** For your homework, you performed the initial work required to launch a story-based strategy – you identified the issue, power holders, points of intervention, and the possible utility of one story-based approach of your choice.



For the next 45 minutes for our in-class activity, you will work as if you are a team of characters whose perspectives you took in the homework. As you will remember, when the case story ended, the characters were feeling like they wanted to take action, but they didn't know how to use their stories to counter ideas that were so pervasive. It is your job to help the Hamilton characters use story to achieve change.



Imagine yourselves as these characters and pretend that you've all gathered together after the church. Acting as these characters, you and your colleagues will use the handouts to complete the story-based strategy model and develop a storytelling approach to address the discourse on skin bleaching. You should use 1 or more of the personal stories from your group to guide or frame your intervention. Be sure to choose a note taker and timekeeper.

- b) **Students form small working groups.**



As much as is feasible, assemble teams with students who chose different community member's perspectives for the homework assignment to maximize

diversity of perspectives on each team. I will give you a worksheet to help guide your strategy development process with your team.


[INSTRUCTOR SHOULD DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT ON IN-CLASS TEAM ASSIGNMENT; SEE PAGE 16 OF THIS TEACHING NOTE FOR HANDOUT.]

➤ **NOTE:** *Students should divide themselves into groups with 3-5 members. Groups should be topically heterogeneous meaning they should comprise members who chose a variety of character perspectives for the homework assignment. It is possible students chose the perspectives of only 3-4 characters from the story. If this is the case, try to encourage the groups to have as many perspectives as possible. Most importantly, each group should have at least one person take the perspective of the Sukhon Pradtana or Sally Kreisberg characters, since they represent the public health professionals who are knowledgeable about health communications and most likely to convene and lead a team of people around story-centered health promotion strategies. It is important that student groups represent a variety of perspectives so that students learn about interdisciplinary teamwork and cross-stakeholder collaboration, which are common in public health practice. Please avoid assembling groups with fewer than 3 students. Team size and number of teams can be modified depending on class size.*

Recommended Meeting Agenda & Timeline (45 minutes):

- **Step 1** (5 minutes): Homework Debrief – Within your group of 3-5 students, discuss the intervention ideas each person developed for the homework assignment. Identify common themes in your team members’ assignments and also identify viable intervention ideas for the team project based on shared values. Each team member should be prepared to report on at least one of the steps for story-based strategy campaigns, and your group will need to turn in a summary of the intervention strategy you developed together. The intervention should be directly related to your vision and campaign goals given the narrative challenges you identified. Your timekeeper and note taker should help keep your discussion on track AND create a PowerPoint slide OR neatly handwritten points summarizing the final idea.
- **Step 2** (5 minutes): Vision & Campaign Goal-Setting
- **Step 3** (5 minutes): Identify Targets & Audiences
- **Step 4** (5 minutes): Construct & Deconstruct the Narratives
- **Step 5** (5 minutes): Define Use of Your Story
- **Step 6** (5 minutes): Design Primary Campaign Narrative
- **Step 7** (10 minutes): Define Your Intervention – Group members should agree on a community-centered story-based campaign or intervention somehow related to the campaign narrative you identified in Step 6. Recall the range of examples described in the VanDeCarr text – collecting and distributing micro-narratives, video advocacy, theater for social change, books created by communities, etc. Think creatively and practically!
- **Step 8** (5 minutes): Propose an Evaluation Strategy

b) Reconvene for Class Discussion (35 minutes)

- **Groups Report Back** (25 minutes): Each team reports back to the large group on their story-based strategy. Each member of the team should report to the class on some aspect of the strategy. The group note taker should send the teacher a 1-2-slide PowerPoint summary of the final idea before presenting. If your classroom is not equipped with a projector, ask students to summarize their interventions in short descriptive sentences on a chalkboard, flipchart, or white board.
 - **NOTE:** Each group should take 5 minutes to present their strategy (assuming there are a maximum of 5 groups).
- **Class Discussion of Campaigns** (10 minutes):
 -  Now reviewing all the agreed-upon ideas generated and displayed on the PowerPoint slides from each of the groups, let's discuss how they compare.
 - **Q:** Are there common themes across the campaign strategies?
 - **Q:** What strategies and campaigns most resonate with you?
 - **Q:** What were the most challenging aspects of strategy planning?

c) Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

- Ask students to spend 5 minutes reflecting on one personal story they want to share, but haven't shared publicly before. Use the following prompt:



To close today's session, I'd like you to write about a personal story you might want to tell publicly to bring about social change in one of your communities (school, neighborhood, city, cultural group, online network, etc.). The story can be on any topic – it can center on body image, skin lightening, colorism, or any other topic. Ask yourself, what barriers and opportunities do you face for sharing?

The purpose of this activity is to put yourself in the position of the people in communities you hope to impact. Before asking research participants to complete surveys on sensitive topics, tell their stories, and disclose their histories, we need to know what that feels like, including the courage involved and the potential consequences of sharing publicly.

- Spend 5 minutes allowing students to share some of the ideas they wrote about, should they feel comfortable.

END CASE DISCUSSION

WRITTEN HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Developing a Story-Based Strategy Campaign Model

From the case, *Coloring the Narrative: How to Use Storytelling to Create Social Change in Skin Tone Ideals*

Due: At start of class session

Length: 4 pages (List of citations should appear on separate page beyond the 3 required pages)

Format: Typewritten single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font (or Arial 11-point font), one-inch margins

For our upcoming class, your readings cover background information on skin tone ideals, marketing strategies in the cosmetic skin-lightening field, media advocacy, and strategic storytelling techniques for creating social change. A recurring theme in these readings is the need to understand the key elements of dominant stories and how to construct counter-narratives that promote change. Challenges for practitioners using story-based change models range from evaluation to diffusion of ideas to reframing issues that exclude major groups. But when done persuasively and disseminated effectively, story-based strategies can be highly memorable, disruptive, and successful at reframing problems.

Pretend you are one of the following community members described in the case:

- **Rebecca Obafemi:** Nigerian mother who moved to Hamilton without skin-lightening cream
- **Piti Bunyasarn:** Thai au pair who moved to Hamilton with skin-lightening cream
- **Muñoz:** Immigrant bodega owner who refuses to stock skin-lightening products
- **Kwame Michael Boateng:** Pastor of church for many Anglophone African Hamilton residents
- **Sukhon Pradtana:** Master's student in health communications who meets with Piti Bunyasarn
- **Sally Kreisberg:** Sukhon's mentor who studies body image and risky cosmetic products and procedures

Once you choose a character/community member, think about the community-organizing dilemma described at the end of the case and use the examples you read about in "Storytelling & Social Change" as models to identify how to use your character's story in a social change intervention. This assignment is designed to help you learn to construct a clear vision and precise goals, identify feasible targets, and begin to wage a battle of story by deconstructing elements of the public narrative to challenge. In our next class session, your homework assignment will be central to your completion of a group-based activity and class presentation.

Requirements

You are required to read the assigned pages/sections of the **(a)** "Storytelling and Social Change" and **(b)** "Re: Imagining Change" texts, as well as **(c)** the other listed required readings.

Your Written Assignment

Directions for Assignment

1. Give an overview of the dominant narrative about skin lightening that exists in the teaching case and what specific goal you would like to achieve with a story-based strategy for change.
2. Describe **(a)** the public health threats associated with cosmetic skin-lightening products, **(b)** how they target women disproportionately, and **(c)** how you think they may be related to the public health problem of disordered eating and/or distorted body images.
3. Use Step 2 of the Narrative Power Analysis diagram (p. 6, *Reinsborough & Canning*) to identify possible targets (institutions, decision makers, audiences) in the Hamilton community for a story-based strategy for social change. Who has the power?
4. Use Step 3 of the Narrative Power Analysis (p. 6, *Reinsborough & Canning*) to identify the specific dominant narratives/stories that need to change for the Hamilton community to achieve your campaign goal. Deconstruct the narrative into dominant framing patterns, change agents, and narrative filters (p. 9, *Reinsborough & Canning*).
5. Describe the community member from the case whose perspective you've chosen to embody. Why is her/his perspective and/or social position compelling for a story-based strategy for social change?
6. Choose 1-4 functions of your chosen character's story (p. 9, *VanDeCarr*) that will allow for optimal reframing of the dominant narrative (p. 19, *Reinsborough & Canning*) and brings about a shift for the community (social change).
7. Propose a story-based community intervention that addresses skin-lightening practices in Hamilton and centers on an aspect of your chosen character's story. Draw inspiration from real-world advocacy campaigns described in the VanDeCarr text. Describe the primary campaign message, method of distribution, plan for community engagement, and an impact evaluation strategy.
8. Propose an evaluation component of your intervention. Reference pages 36-37 of the VanDeCarr text for ideas about methods for merging data and stories understanding social impact indicators.

Grading Criteria

Your grade on this assignment will be based on clarity and thoughtful application of critical thinking skills, public health principles, and strategic storytelling techniques to support your responses to the questions above. Your paper must integrate and specifically refer to principles and techniques of story-based strategies outlined in the assigned readings. Please include at least three references in your paper in addition to citing the assigned technical documents. Your list of citations should appear on a separate page beyond the three required pages for this assignment.

IN-CLASS TEAM ACTIVITY

Instructions: For your homework, you performed the initial work required to launch a story-based strategy centered on one of the Hamilton community members. For our in-class activity, you and a team of colleagues who took the perspectives of different Hamilton community members will spend 45 minutes completing the story-based strategy model and develop a story-based intervention addressing the discourse on skin bleaching in Hamilton. At least one of your group members should represent the perspective of characters *Sukhon Pradtana* or *Sally Kreisberg*, who are the voices of public health and communication science. Be sure to choose a note taker and timekeeper. Follow these steps and the recommended timeline:

Eight Steps to Launching a Story/Narrative-Based Strategy Campaign

- 1. Homework Debrief** (5 minutes): Within your group of 3-5 students, discuss each person's ideas developed for the homework. Identify common themes in your team members' assignments and also identify viable intervention ideas for the team project based on shared values. Each team member should be prepared to report on at least one of the steps for story-based strategy campaigns, and your group will need to turn in a summary of the final campaign or intervention idea you develop together. Your timekeeper and note taker should help keep your discussion on track.
- 2. Visioning & Campaign Goal-Setting** (5 minutes): Based on your characters' stories and perspectives, what attitudes, beliefs, or practices do you hope to change overall?
- 3. Identifying Targets & Audiences** (5 minutes): What systems or institutions are operating and supporting the dominant narrative? Who are the decision makers and what are their assumptions? Who are we messaging to and what do we want them to do?
- 4. Construct & Deconstruct the Narratives** (5 minutes): What is the story you need to change and its underlying assumptions? What is the story you want to promote and what are your shared assumptions about that story?
- 5. Define Use of Your Story** (5 minutes): Do you want to use your story to organize, educate, advocate, or some combination of these options? Defend your choice.
- 6. Design Primary Campaign Narrative** (5 minutes): What's your main message, story arc, who is saying it, and why?
- 7. Define Intervention** (10 minutes): Identify points of intervention, 3-5 specific goals, its platform, method of engaging community, and possible impact. Consider WHO you would engage, HOW you would fund your intervention, and WHAT potential roadblocks might exist. What actions are you asking audiences to take?
- 8. Propose Evaluation** (5 minutes): Propose a method for evaluating the effectiveness of your intervention. Use VanDeCarr text and homework exercise as references.

Deliverable: The note taker should prepare 1-2 PowerPoint slide(s) or neatly hand-written points that summarize your strategy, which should be submitted to the instructor and used to guide your group presentation. Your group will present your findings in a 5-minute class presentation at the end of the discussion period. Each group member must speak during the presentation.

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