

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

UTC Scholar

Honors Theses

Student Research, Creative Works, and
Publications

5-2021

Albinism in Africa: examining identity formulation

Corinne Tinkham

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, vgw162@mocs.utc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.utc.edu/honors-theses>



Part of the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tinkham, Corinne, "Albinism in Africa: examining identity formulation" (2021). *Honors Theses*.

This Theses is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research, Creative Works, and Publications at UTC Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of UTC Scholar. For more information, please contact scholar@utc.edu.

**Albinism in Africa:
Examining Identity Formulation**

Corinne M. Tinkham

Departmental Honors Thesis
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Department of Anthropology

Examination Date: 4/9/21

Dr. Zibin Guo
Professor of Anthropology
Thesis Director

Dr. Julia Cummiskey
Professor of History
Department Examiner

© 2021

Corinne M. Tinkham

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	Pg. 3
Introduction.....	Pg. 4
Background Information.....	Pg. 5
Infancy to Childhood: Schooling Experiences and Their Effect on Identity....	Pg. 10
Role Models and Their Importance.....	Pg. 16
Transitioning to Adulthood.....	Pg. 18
Common Mythologies.....	Pg. 20
Witchcraft.....	Pg. 22
Addressing Ethnocentrism & Bias in the Media and Academic Studies.....	Pg. 24
Stigma.....	Pg. 28
Language Choices.....	Pg. 30
Conclusion.....	Pg. 31
References.....	Pg. 33

Abstract

Albinism is a genetic condition that often intersects at disability and perceived notions of race; this double-stigmatization has proved problematic for people with albinism living in Africa, who not only appear physically different from others in their community but are also commonly regarded as ontologically different. Individuals with albinism in Africa undergo frequent challenges throughout their lifetime that significantly shape their identities. This process of identity formation begins in early childhood and is greatly impacted by unequal access to healthcare and schooling, harmful rumors and mythologies surrounding the condition's origins, violence, workplace discrimination, income inequality, and many other factors. In contrast to Erving Goffman's theory of spoiled identity, many African people with albinism facing the double-stigmatization of race and ability have reclaimed their identities in the midst of adversity and live happy and successful lives. This analysis of over twenty sources further explores the socio-cultural aspects of albinism in Africa; the majority of existing research is medical or biological in nature.

Keywords: albinism, identity, Africa, stigma

Introduction

Identity is a series of social, cultural, geographic, and historical constructs that define who we are and how we interpret and experience life and the world presented before us. The process of identity formation begins in childhood, and is constantly evolving as we grow within complex social and cultural realms; additionally, we must manage the challenges of maintaining our own self-constructed identities while struggling to survive with the new—and less valued—identities given and created by socially and culturally formulated ideas, perceptions, and needs. These include race, ethnicity, social class, age, religion, gender, physiological changes due to disease, and physical and mental ability. This paper, based on an extensive literature review, explores and discusses the social and cultural significances of albinism in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the identity-building process that people with albinism (PWA) encounter, a battle beginning with infancy that remains a source of adversity for all of one's life, evident through unequal access to medical treatment, school and workplace discrimination, social isolation, and subjugation to the negative consequences of superstitious beliefs.

Background

Albinism, a rare inherited genetic disorder resulting in a lack of melanin production, the pigmentation that is responsible for the color “of skin, hair... and [the] iris of the eyes,” is highly prevalent in Africa.¹ In fact, the probability of having albinism in Africa “is ten times greater than the world average,” likely due to evolutionary-biological factors like geographic isolation, which results in genetic drift.² One form of genetic drift, known as the founder’s effect, accounts for low genetic diversity in small isolated communities. The founder’s effect could explain the higher rates of albinism, a recessive disorder, in one concentrated area of the world. Regardless of its origins, albinism in Africa presents an intersectional case of identity struggle; people with this condition encounter the complications accompanying the disability experience as well as a conflicted sense of racial belonging.

It is important to note that this research will refer to individuals as “people/persons with albinism” or “PWA” rather than “albino.” While many PWA refer to themselves as albino, modern disability studies call for the able-bodied/able-minded community to utilize person-first language. Person-first language is a practice that prioritizes an individual’s inherent humanity over any physical and/or mental disability he or she might possess. Therefore, the term “albino” may be present within the literature, but only when directly quoted from an outside source. Ultimately, PWA should refer to themselves and be referred to as the terminology they prefer, because it “allows these individuals to position themselves in their communities” and fosters a sense of safety and acceptance.³

¹Medline Plus, “Albinism,” *US National Library of Medicine*, Accessed on 12 Feb. 2021, <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001479.htm>

²Charlotte Baker, “The myths surrounding people with albinism in South Africa and Zimbabwe,” *Journal of African Culture Studies* 22 (2010): 169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2010.491412>

³Giorgio Brocco, “Labeling albinism: language and discourse surrounding people with albinism in Tanzania,” *Disability and Society* 8 (2015): 1153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2015.1075869>

Additionally, it is essential to state that the mistreatment of PWA is universal. However, the lack of skin pigmentation associated with albinism presents itself more obviously in equatorial regions of the world like Africa than it would in the Nordic or Scandinavian countries, where light skin, eyes, and hair do not deviate as drastically from the typical standards of physical appearance expectations. Hence, in these locations, PWA may feel as if they can “pass” more easily, integrating into so-called “normal” society without issue. Passing is a sociological phenomenon defined as “the ability of a person to be regarded as a member of social groups other than his/her own.”⁴ There are countless instances of individuals “passing” throughout history. For example, in the United States during the height of racial tensions in the twentieth century, many light-skinned Black or multiracial people would succeed in “passing” as white to avoid rampant civil rights violations and discrimination. Similarly, in India’s caste system, members of lower castes dressed in Brahmin clothing in an attempt to ascend their class status and “pass” as wealthy. Passing is an incredibly complex social experience that becomes even more convoluted when regarding disability; in some circumstances, identifying as disabled can provide an individual with the resources he or she needs to succeed. On most occasions, however, people with disabilities face increased stigmatization and judgment.

Furthermore, there is a palpable difference in the disability experience based on the visibility of the condition; persons with an autism spectrum disorder, for example, may be able to “mask” their disability from the general public in a way a person using a wheelchair could not. Albinism is a noticeable condition; however, some of the symptoms of the disorder, such as poor eyesight and a heightened risk of contracting skin cancer, are less visible and less likely to be immediately perceived by others.

⁴World Heritage Encyclopedia, “Passing,” *Project Gutenberg*, Accessed on 22 Jan. 2021, [http://www.self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Passing_\(sociology\)](http://www.self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Passing_(sociology))

Most notably, “negative attitudes towards PWA are not unique to Africa,” although media sources rarely cover the targeted discrimination or crimes against PWA in other regions of the world, as it disproves the common agenda that Africa must be more barbaric and uncivilized in its treatment of those with disabilities than in any other continent.⁵ Several studies have noted that violence towards PWA appears to be disproportionately higher in southern Africa (which includes, but is not limited to, South Africa, a state that has documented steep rates of violence against PWA) than in other regions or countries of the continent.⁶ In the case of South Africa, it is possible that this discrepancy can be explained by the complex racial relations introduced by the state’s white minority and their apartheid government; despite its abolition in the 1990s, its negative impact is still visible to this day. However, there is no substantial evidence to verify this claim, as it remains largely unexplained in other literature.

It is essential to discuss albinism’s nature and if it is indeed correct to label it as a disability. Disability has no true permanent or universal definition, as it varies between cultures and generations. As aforementioned, albinism is associated with vision problems, ranging from minor eyesight issues to legal blindness. The lack of melanin in a PWA’s skin makes him or her highly susceptible to severe sunburns, which can cause permanent cell damage and lead to deadly diseases like melanoma. Adults who were constantly exposed to direct sunlight as children may suffer from advanced skin cancer, reducing their overall quality and length of life. One of the largest parts of the condition is battling severe stigmatization. Albinism can lead to an increased risk of mental health issues such as a “loss of self-esteem, depression, isolation, [and]

⁵Caroline Bradbury-Jones, Anita Franklin, Patricia Lund, and Julie Taylor, “Children with albinism in African regions: their rights to ‘being’ and ‘doing,’” *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 18 (2018): 3. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-018-0144-8>

⁶Maureen Mswela, “Violent attacks against persons with albinism in South Africa: A human right perspective,” *African Human Rights Law Journal* 17, (2017): 122. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/1996-2096/2017/v17n1a6>

suicide.”⁷ While past studies on disability would immediately deem PWA as disabled “victims,” especially according to Erving Goffman’s theory of spoiled identity, the evolving language of today’s disability studies posit impairment as a social construct rather than a prison sentence. Albinism is defined and accepted as a disability for the sake of this paper’s intentions. “There is a growing recognition and acceptance in Africa that PWA should be recognized as disabled,” as this affords the community the protections and rights set forth by the United Nations for people with special needs.⁸ It also offers the opportunity for PWA to participate in and engage with a body of similar people. However, it is important to note that there are some individuals with albinism who do indeed find being designated as disabled offensive; therefore, respect will always be at the forefront of references to the nature of albinism.

The lived experience of a PWA in Africa is often at the forefront of intersectionality; when people of color live with albinism, race and disability intersect. When African women live with albinism, gender, disability, and race intersect. These complexities are detailed in the following quote:

While it is clear that persons with albinism experience marginalisation and discrimination, there seem to be some difficulties or contradictions in identifying the category into which they fall on the basis of discrimination. It appears that there are conflicting opinions as to how discrimination against persons with albinism should be dealt with, namely, whether the orthodox civil rights approach, based on colour (independently from the grounds of race and ethnic origin) should be adopted, or the disability rights approach.⁹

Albinism is typically understood on a spectrum in an African context. Many Africans acknowledge albinism to be a natural genetic disorder, while a media-amplified minority considers more spiritual interpretations behind the origin of the disability. Historically, “the

⁷Sheryl Reimer-Kirkham, “Albinism, spiritual and cultural practices, and implications for health, healthcare, and human rights: a scoping review,” *Disability and Society* 34 (2019): 755. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1566051>

⁸Caroline Bradbury-Jones, Patricia Lund, and Julie Taylor, “Witchcraft-related Abuse and Murder of Children with Albinism in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Conceptual Review,” *Child Abuse Review* 28 (2019): 2. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2549>

⁹Abdallah and Ally Possi, “The identity question versus appropriateness of legal anti-discrimination measures: Endorsing the disability rights approach to albinism,” *African Disability Rights Yearbook* 5 (2017). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3070933>

divine theory of disease asserts that illness is a punishment sent by an angry god as chastisement for disobedience or sin.”¹⁰ Alternatively, the demonic theory of disease suggests evil or magical beings like witches or demons are the scapegoat for such conditions. The basis of these more traditional views is vital to understanding popular reception to albinism in some African communities. Generally, humanity is inherently afraid of accepting differences within its social realm; so, adaptive movements like passing have become increasingly normalized to escape ostracization. When assimilatory mechanisms like passing are not possible, conflict tends to spark, creating potentially dangerous situations for those with special needs. The fear, self-consciousness, and anxiety encompassing a PWA’s surroundings from childhood undoubtedly shapes and affects the formulation of their identities. The reactions of their parents, teachers, peers, medical doctors, and politicians further molds their sense of selfhood, and ensures or endangers their physical security.

Finally, many mythologies regarding albinism’s origins are discussed in African culture. These creative explanations for a complex phenomenon can sometimes result in discrimination, harm, or the willful ignorance of a person’s intrinsic value as a human being. However, the Western media is guilty of sensationalizing the propensity of violence in African society’s treatment of PWAs, further distorting their international identity and place in the world as perpetual victims. Ultimately, the steps to combating unfavorable socio-cultural problems for persons with albinism in Africa relies on the expansion of PWA-led discourse and commentary, as well as the normalization of the condition with ample communal medical, social, and political support. A compromise is possible between the evolving attitude of disability studies and the more traditional and conservative views of identity.

¹⁰Frank M. Snowden, *Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present* (New Haven: Yale, 2019): 10, 13.

Infancy to Childhood: Schooling Experiences and Their Effect on Identity

Medical personnel periodically lack the experience and expertise on albinism to properly consult with families welcoming new babies affected by the condition. Even highly-educated nurses can perpetuate harmful misconceptions against newborns with albinism, sometimes refusing to touch the baby's body for fear of contamination.¹¹ Caregivers have a role in society to nurture their patients, but when PWA visit local hospitals, doctors, and other medical facilities, the antagonism they face can be confusing and disheartening. When the professionals responsible for a community's medical health and wellbeing reject and mock their patients instead of providing them with comfort and care, it can be detrimental to self-image. How is a PWA expected to return to these facilities when they may represent an unsafe or judgmental environment? This fear could explain why PWA rarely seek the medical attention they need, afraid of the ostracism, which ultimately leads to a decreased quality of life.¹²

Untreated consequences of albinism, like sustained sun damage, can morph into more dangerous issues, like skin cancer. The more isolated and rural an area is, the more likely the treatment is poor quality (or wholly nonexistent) and therefore, injurious to PWA. A common example of PWA avoiding medical care occurs among the elderly, who may not seek necessary treatment due to the persistent fear of being kidnapped or raped while traveling alone. This fear is related to a variety of factors: age, ability, and prevalence of violence, which, when combined, exemplifies their susceptibility to danger. Consequently, PWA are at a high risk of contracting human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV) due to their vulnerable status in society, and may avoid seeking help because of the shame and stigmatization that accompanies sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs). When left untreated, STDs can result in complications such as various forms of

¹¹Baker, "The myths surrounding people with albinism," 169.

¹²Reimer-Kirkham, "Albinism, spiritual and cultural practices, and implications for health, healthcare, and human rights," 760.

genital cancer, infertility, and further spread of the infection among partners and children. These experiences are not solely limited to PWA in Africa; rather, many of these issues are experienced by all people living in underserved areas. Additionally, medical scarcity is not a natural state of life, but is instead created by the political, social, and economic decisions of a state's governance, as well as the historical legacies of colonialism and post-colonial exploitation.

Common superstitions on albinism hold women and mothers primarily responsible for their children's condition, whether that be accusations concerning infidelity, maternal collaboration with evil spirits, or premarital sexual relations. This cycle of blame encourages fathers to leave their children, doubting a baby with albinism is genetically their offspring, and ultimately placing the burden of care solely on the mother or another close female relative. As a result, many children with albinism grow up in single-parent households, often resulting in less economic security and access to essential disability services. However, many other factors contribute to the percentage of single-parent households in Africa, just like anywhere else in the world: labor migration, premature death, dissolution of romantic interest. According to a biological study conducted in 2014, some mothers bond with their children physically and biologically in a way men cannot; this logic states that the birth of a child exiting the womb always confirms the mother's role in parenthood, but never the father's.¹³

This concept of maternal altruism is also psychologically enforced through gender norms that encourage women to stay at home and raise and nurture their offspring instead of pursuing full-time employment. Some parents, both mothers and fathers, are unable to cope with their child's special needs or fear the lack of support that will be offered by extended family and friends and resort to strangling or disposing of their babies. Similarly, midwives and other

¹³Marina Ashade, "Why Do Mothers Care More About Their Children Than Fathers?" *Psychology Today*, (2014).
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/dollars-and-sex/201401/why-do-mothers-care-more-about-their-children-fathers>

medical personnel who deliver babies may attempt to privately kill the infant before the mother is aware of the circumstances, claiming the baby was a stillbirth or late miscarriage.¹⁴ While this might occur out of a sense of benevolence, it also demonstrates the general lack of awareness surrounding albinism, ignoring that a baby with the condition can live a full and happy life.

As children with albinism grow older, they begin to formulate their identity. This primarily occurs in their interactions at school, where they are exposed to other children and adults outside of the family for the first time. An overwhelming number of testimonies claim that the majority of children with albinism are loved and accepted by their close relatives, and that the real challenge involves assimilating into society outside of the household.¹⁵ Acceptance by one's community is a vital element in a safe and well-adjusted life, and is particularly important for those with disabilities who may be excluded from traditional narratives. Due to the conditions of the disorder, albinism can have consequences that isolate children, both physically (for example, playing outside during recess on a sunny day) and socially (other kids avoiding eating at the same lunch table as a child with albinism, a form of de facto segregation.) Clearly, this can have a "negative impact on the development of self-esteem obtained through the dynamics of group and team activities," and can arise whether the child is enrolled in school or not, leading to frequently documented emotional and behavioral problems.¹⁶

There are several approaches to schooling a child with albinism. Many kids attend "regular" schools where they are frequently bullied by both students and teachers, who are often unfamiliar with their condition. They may struggle when facing health-related problems at school if no modifications are made to accommodate their poor vision or extreme sun sensitivity. Some families try to equalize these problems by sending their children to school with necessary

¹⁴Baker, "The myths surrounding people with albinism," 176.

¹⁵Ibid, 173.

¹⁶Retha Gaigher and Patricia Lund, "A health intervention programme for children with albinism at a special school in South Africa," *Health Education Research* 17 (2002): 366. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/17.3.365>

aids, including special glasses, protective clothing and headgear, and sunscreen. However, some of these accommodations further segregate PWA from their peers. The children integrated into these “regular” schools “desire to appear as normal and inconspicuous as possible,” as they must tackle the typical challenges of adolescence plus the additional pressure of looking different from their classmates.¹⁷ They might find the measures to prevent sunburn embarrassing and avoid using or wearing them to their own detriment. On the other hand, families who are more financially stable have the option to send their children to “special schools for the visually impaired,” which can help “guide them to an independent and responsible adulthood,” and ultimately empower them to enter the world with more confidence.¹⁸ Additionally, these facilities are often staffed by adults with albinism, providing positive role models who can empathize with the life experiences of their students. Despite the appeal of these institutions, they are often equipped with subpar amenities and outdated technology. Some are boarding schools specifically designed for PWA, which often carry accusations of sexual assault or child abuse due to lackadaisical oversight and severe underfunding. Furthermore, several critics have condemned some of the accommodations the special schools offer, claiming that adaptive measures like reading and writing in Braille could harm kids planning to attend “normal” universities in the future.¹⁹ Unfortunately, other children stay at home and remain completely uneducated, usually due to safety concerns from their families and/or insufficient funds to pay for private school or extra protection in public school. Occasionally, children with albinism are discouraged from pursuing education altogether, due to the misinformed idea that their condition is correlated with intellectual disabilities; in actuality, albinism has no connection whatsoever to level of intelligence.

¹⁷Ibid, 369.

¹⁸Baker, “The myths surrounding people with albinism,” 175.

¹⁹Irene K. Nyamu, “Competing Intergenerational Perspectives of Living with Albinism in Kenya and their Implications for Children's Lives,” *Childhood* 26 (2020): 443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568220931580>

Psychologically, children are not prepared to be constantly hyper-vigilant, aware of their positionality and security (or lack thereof) in the world at all times. However, most PWA, including children, are not afforded this luxury; “the combined effects of otherness and watchfulness can have a profound effect on children’s agency.”²⁰ The concept of “otherness” refers to the feeling a stigmatized person may have in the presence of dominant societal groups. For example, a person with a disability may feel like the “other” in an environment where the majority of the people are similar in their able-bodied and able-mindedness; this perception—which can be both internal and external—denies an individual's agency and sense of control. The “othered” person feels isolated and incapable of navigating an environment that is ill-equipped for their needs. PWA enrolled in traditional schools are frequently viewed as ontologically different from their peers, but some anthropologists suggest the “forced segregation” of special-needs boarding schools can have harmful effects on children, despite their primary intention of providing a safe learning environment.²¹ The supposed ontological differences of PWA perceived by able-minded and able-bodied individuals are used to justify discrimination and maltreatment.²² Thus, reactions to PWA may be violent and unrelenting rather than accepting and open to assimilation, due to a public perception regarding them as sub-human.

Additionally, young girls with albinism are sometimes seen as “not worth educating” compared to their male counterparts, resulting in disproportionately-educated populations where men continuously yield greater power.²³ Gender significantly affects one’s accessibility to a plethora of disability resources, in Africa and worldwide. A total lack of support in pursuing an

²⁰Bradbury-Jones, Lund, and Taylor, “Witchcraft-related Abuse and Murder of Children with Albinism in Sub-Saharan Africa,” 18.

²¹Ibid, 20.

²²Ontology is a field of philosophy that examines the nature of existence and the act of being human. Ontological differences refer to the distinctions some people may make about a certain group to suggest that they are not entirely human.

²³Bradbury-Jones, Franklin, Lund, and Taylor, “Children with albinism in African regions,” 6.

education can lead to a vulnerable child's loss of self-esteem and motivation, and worsen the pre-existing conditions of their current stigmatization. Without any education, job opportunities become sparse. There are many outside studies on albinism and other related issues that condemn Africa's traditional social organization, claiming that women are considered deeply inferior to men.²⁴

As aforementioned, many mothers in Africa must raise their children with albinism without the assistance of a second parent. These single moms take on the responsibility of protecting and advocating for their child relentlessly in a society reluctant to understand the nature of such a condition. Single parenthood is in no way unique to Africa; the divorce rates of the Western world testify this fact. Some superstitions claim a woman who gives birth to a child with albinism must be a witch. There are indeed some mythologies about albinism that can severely damage a woman's self-worth and place in society. For example, in Namibia, women with albinism or women who have given birth to a child with albinism are deemed as "possessing a particularly offensive smell," strong enough to "make a person sitting next to them vomit."²⁵ There is no bodily smell associated with albinism; this unfounded and cruel ostracism is merely an excuse for those without albinism to further segregate themselves, effectively othering PWA. Importantly, this cruelty towards PWA and their parents is not necessarily rooted in the hatred and critique of women as much as it is the perpetuation of societal ableism. Regardless, women work hard to fill the gap in caretaking duties of children with albinism.

²⁴Aloy Ojilere and Muhammad M. Saleh, "Violation of Dignity and Life: Challenges and Prospects for Women and Girls with Albinism in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* 4 (2019): 147. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-018-0085-0>

²⁵Ibid, 149.

Role Models and Their Importance

Seeing successful PWA can empower others with the condition and normalize the inner-workings of the disability to the general able-bodied population. Representation, therefore, is essential in building acceptance for PWA within communities, and as previously discussed, acceptance is vital to maintaining self-security. Salif Keita of Mali produces Afro-pop music, and his work often challenges the stigmatization of people with albinism. One of his most famous songs states that while his skin is white, he is still Black, and his differences make him beautiful.²⁶ Additionally, Keita has been outspoken against the reported ritualized killings of PWA, and raises money through his work to pay for skin cancer treatment and research in Africa. The late gospel musician Geoffrey Zigoma of Malawi was wildly successful in his creative endeavors too, and also served as an advocate for individuals with albinism across Africa. Zigoma's written lyrics were often social or political in nature, many tackling the ever-present issue of "violence against women," which he claimed was "rampant in Malawi."²⁷ While he was well-accepted and celebrated as a talented musician, Zigoma's name became bastardized in some communities, synonymous with "white man," and some people even used—and continue to use—"Zigoma" as a cruel taunt directed towards PWA. Ultimately, Zigoma hoped his presence in popular culture would prove to the world that people with albinism are capable of achieving love, success, and normalcy. He went on to marry a Black woman, challenging the barriers of perceived "race" (relating exclusively to the color of his skin) and marriage lines. Whether Zigoma's critics truly considered him to be racially white is unknown; rather, the anger directed towards him appears to be based in ableism and class relations.

²⁶Baker, "The myths surrounding people with albinism" 175.

²⁷"Ambassador for Malawi's albinos," *BBC News*, (2006). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5009190.stm>

Aside from the entertainment sector, African PWA also thrive in academic and political fields of work. The late Professor John Makumbe of Zimbabwe was a prolific political scientist who campaigned for disability rights. The United Nations recently appointed Nigerian lawyer and advocate Ikponwosa Ero as the “first Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of Human Rights by Persons with Albinism,” a talented author and human rights activist.²⁸ Ero’s highly-visible position at the UN is a testimony to her intelligence and hard work. Ero is also a member of the UN-based coalition, the Albinism World Alliance, which has rigorous goals of combating stigma and abuse against PWA. Al-Shaymaa Kwegir is a member of Tanzanian Parliament and a woman with albinism. “I never dreamed of being a leader, because growing up, I never saw an albino leader. I thought to myself, no way will I ever walk among leaders,” she stated, reflecting a prevalent mindset among individuals with disabilities.²⁹ She has conquered multiple social and legal barriers as a female politician with a visible disability, and serves as a role model for young girls and boys with albinism who have dreams of working in civil service.

²⁸Reimer-Kirkham, “Albinism, spiritual and cultural practices, and implications for health, healthcare, and human rights,” 748.

²⁹*White and Black: Crimes of Color*. Directed by Jean Francois Mean. Cité Amérique Productions (2010).

Transitioning to Adulthood

“Work is important for social acceptance,” and considering most PWAs face rampant job discrimination, the search for employment can be a difficult and disheartening task.³⁰ Some recruiters deny jobs to people with albinism solely based on their appearance; others claim they cannot hire individuals with vision problems. As a general rule, outdoor jobs pose the risk of heightening a PWA’s chances of health complications because of sun exposure, and must therefore be disregarded entirely from job searches. One persistent mythology about PWA claims that they die young; this idea of an “unnaturally shortened life” can also impact employment opportunities, as hiring companies may not want to invest in a so-called “short-term” employee.³¹ As discussed earlier, many PWA do not have the educational background required to qualify for some levels of employment, due to issues of personal safety and accessibility. Work is a marker of adulthood, and the inability to have and hold a job not only contributes to the economic exploitation of PWA as a lower socio-economic class, but it may also instill psychological feelings of worthlessness and shame, especially if that individual has family members to support.

Romantic relationships, particularly the institution of marriage, can also pose problems for African PWA. According to one source, “being unmarried is more unusual and stigmatising in many African countries than it is in the global north,” accounting for more potential deviances from the norm for others in the community to speculate about and ostracize.³² As another prominent marker of adulthood, some people may hold the opinion that remaining unmarried limits oneself to a permanent state of adolescence. One African woman with albinism asked,

³⁰Baker, “The myths surrounding people with albinism,” 175.

³¹Stine Høllum Braathen, “Albinism in Malawi: knowledge and beliefs from an African setting,” *Disability and Society* 21 (2006): 604. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590600918081>

³²Bradbury-Jones, Franklin, Lund, and Taylor, “Children with albinism in African regions” 5.

“Should I marry a white person or another albino?”³³ This sentiment demonstrates a feeling of racial isolation among Africans with albinism, a jarring realization of not fulfilling the socially-acceptable categories of race. The limitation of one’s romantic interests to a binary of a) a white person or b) a PWA provides important social commentary on the issue. A Black African woman with albinism, which may physically present her as “white” to the public, does not feel “Black” enough to marry into the Black African community; instead, she considers marrying a white person, possibly suggesting she perceives herself as racially white, or at least feels more comfortable identifying with the white community. This intersection of race and ability is extremely interesting, and such preferences undoubtedly differ from person to person. This conflict can “transform PWA into eternal outsiders,” an alienating feeling.³⁴

Alongside marriages comes the expectation of children, and in-laws and extended family are often concerned that their future grandchildren will experience the same isolating disability as their parents, potentially withdrawing financial and emotional support for the relationship. This practice further contributes to the burdens of single parenthood. In some traditional settings, however, PWA are expected to remain celibate; “people with albinism are not supposed to be married... but used for ritual sexual intercourse by chiefs and their relatives for the strengthening of chieftainship or for bringing wealth into their families,” ascribing a spiritual and economic duty to sexual tasks.³⁵ These relations are most often non-consensual and bring about feelings of embarrassment and degradation, as well as the risk of sexually-transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and physical and emotional trauma. However, these interactions do not appear to be commonplace.

³³Baker, “The myths surrounding people with albinism,” 176.

³⁴Nyamu, “Competing Intergenerational Perspectives of Living with Albinism,” 436.

³⁵Collis Garikai Machoko. “Albinism: A Life of Ambiguity- A Zimbabwean Experience,” *African Identities* 11, (2013): 328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2013.838896>

Common Mythologies

There are a plethora of superstitions and mythologies that gravitate around the nature and causes of albinism. These misconceptions can have dire consequences, ranging from bullying to more extreme displays of violence, like kidnapping, limb dismemberment, or murder. A common superstition across several African countries states that spitting at a person with albinism one might encounter on the street will prevent that person and his/her offspring from developing the disease.³⁶ These kinds of acts undoubtedly bring shame to PWA, encouraging them to self-isolate and avoid being in public, or otherwise face dehumanizing responses from others. An extremely harmful myth about the magical healing power of women with albinism has led to a substantial increase in reported sexual assaults. These rumors claim HIV can be cured through penetrative sex with women with albinism, particularly virgin women.³⁷ The consequences of such rape are dire, causing the spread of HIV/AIDS to entire families, pregnancy complications, and a generation of abuse and fear. The “death myth” is the common belief that PWA are eschatologically different from human beings, and therefore do not die; they are instead viewed as ghosts, blurring the lines between life and death. This is in direct conflict with the myth that PWA live short lives.³⁸ These mythologies are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as the belief and perpetuation of such fallacies do not always make logical sense.

As a result of the death myth, the funerals of PWA often become large spectator events, as interested onlookers attempt to substantiate that the body in the casket belongs to the person who is said to be deceased; not only is this disrespectful to the memory of the dead, but to their grieving families as well.³⁹ This indicates that some facets of society consider the identities of

³⁶Baker, “The myths surrounding people with albinism in South Africa and Zimbabwe,” 174.

³⁷Ibid, 176.

³⁸Ibid, 177.

³⁹Ibid.

PWA to be “a physical symbol of the in between,” and not belonging to this realm of reality.⁴⁰

Many other convoluted rumors exist to further justify PWA as ontologically different from other human beings. They are accused of being cannibals, mermaids, the result of curses due to ancestral wrongdoings or interracial relations, or even evidence of karmic punishments from a witch or evil spirit.⁴¹

Additionally, some PWA are thought to harbor supernatural powers, including “mind reading, telling the future, preventing rain, protecting a tribe from supernatural events, [and] causing natural calamities.”⁴² This demonstrates the confusing role individuals with albinism hold in society. By some, they are viewed as spiritual entities blessed directly by the gods, while others consider them to be evil and sub-human. A tangentially related example can be found in obesity. On one end of the spectrum, (typically in the developed world) obesity is seen as unhealthy and a potentially deadly disease. On the other end, obesity may be seen by some as a symbol of wealth and well-being. For the people who view PWA as individuals bestowed with power from divine beings, the ownership of a body part from a person with albinism—their limbs, hands, feet, hair—is thought to “bring power, wealth, or success,” leading to some of the violent acts and ritualized killings that influential PWA like Salif Keita have condemned.⁴³ For those who consider the nature of albinism to be evil and unnatural, discrimination often ensues and is justified by the belief that PWA are not fully human.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Machoko, “Albinism: A Life of Ambiguity,” 319.

⁴²Baker, “The myths surrounding people with albinism,” 757.

⁴³Ibid.

Witchcraft

The ritual killings of individuals with albinism are commonly blamed on the popular belief in witchcraft and other traditional superstitions. Legends claim the body parts of PWA hold mythical powers guaranteed to bring wealth and success to anyone who owns them; as a result, a network of black market operations link sellers and their contract killers to rich and elite clientele. However, several anthropologists have determined that the belief in witchcraft does not primarily motivate such violence, and is often used as a scapegoat to avoid hashing out a much more complex issue; rather, general poverty and economic unrest caused by recent mining booms have left many Africans unemployed, impoverished, and desperate to provide for themselves and their families. People of lower income are then more susceptible to accepting a job within the human trafficking system in order to secure a paycheck.⁴⁴ These “hunters” might be completely disinterested or unaware of any intrinsic magical value people with albinism are said to possess, and are only pursuing the fulfillment of a job duty.

Some scholars suggest that the occurrence of such transactions is actually “an extreme coping mechanism for the consequences of neo-liberal policies,” the nasty aftertaste from years of colonial influence, which has effectively destabilized countless developing countries.⁴⁵ In the film, *White and Black: Crimes of Color*, investigative reporters explore the constantly shifting roles of witch doctors in African society. One journalist approaches a “witch doctor” known to possess various body parts, many of which are said to bring “good luck” in activities like fishing and mining. The journalist’s cover is quickly exposed, and she is escorted out before seeing any tangible evidence of body parts belonging to PWA. Tanzanian anthropologist and professor Dr. Simeon Mesaki, an expert on witchcraft and indigenous knowledge systems, states that “these

⁴⁴Jean Burke, Johannes John-Langba and Theresa J. Kaijage, “Media Analysis of Albino Killings in Tanzania: A Social Work and Human Rights Perspective,” *Ethics and Social Welfare* 8, (2014): 119.

⁴⁵Nyamu, “Competing Intergenerational Perspectives of Living with Albinism,” 432.

days, anyone can call themselves a witch doctor... they are a bunch of conmen.”⁴⁶ Therefore, the bastardization of this traditional role does not necessarily represent the true nature of indigenous witchcraft. In general, patients visit witch doctors to seek cures for various ailments and mental illnesses; these doctors commonly use herbal medicine in their treatments. The recent transition of “witch doctors” aiding in the mistreatment of people with albinism is likely due to the growing presence of money-making schemes created in the presence of the political, social, and economic vacuum created by imperialism.

Witches are not the only supernatural creature thought to be plaguing Africa, however; during the colonial period, rumors about vampires frequently permeated African life. The commonality between witches and vampires is that the severity of both of these cryptic figures are boosted by the western media and colonial powers. Margaret Murray and Carlo Ginzburg hold a particularly interesting stance on the accusation of witchcraft in Africa, that witchcraft when reported or recorded by outsiders most often refers to aspects of life such as “an older religion of female and agricultural fertility, [or] of shamans and trances,” rather than a coven of committed evildoers, and is completely misinterpreted.⁴⁷ Ultimately, they claim Europeans (and other outsiders) tend to over-exaggerate the validity and impact of witchcraft in African societies, merely to account for traditions, rituals, and beliefs they themselves cannot understand.

⁴⁶*White and Black: Crimes of Color.*

⁴⁷Margaret Murray and Carlo Ginzburg, 1988, as cited in Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa.* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2000): 22.

Addressing Ethnocentrism & Bias in the Media and Academic Studies

Recently documented ritual killings of PWA have been sensationalized by the media. The atrocities of such killings are gruesome and immoral, but they occur less commonly and, as previously discussed, for different motivations than the ones typically stated by the press. Additionally, the majority of the research done on the issue is conducted *by white people for white people*, often harboring a mild case of Western savior complex. The Western world posits its ideals as the pinnacle of morality and truth, in contrast to the barbaric and uncivilized nature of developing countries worldwide. In an anonymous report published by *The Economist*, a severe condemnation of Tanzania's framework criminalizing the perpetrators of violence against PWA is followed by an unsubtle message stating, "thanks to... a campaign by a Canadian charity to teach Tanzanians that their albino neighbors have no magic powers, attacks against Tanzanian albinos have fallen."⁴⁸ This expression of gratitude is incredibly condescending, hinting that African society and its governance is ignorant, morally corrupt, and incapable of protecting its inhabitants. Africans are insinuated as charity cases and victims, in need of rescuing from their clueless leaders, despite the fact that many local Tanzanian officials are taking productive steps to reduce these crimes and are not seeking a Western lesson on the plausibility of magic to solve their issues.

Even subject experts make unverified and overly-generalized claims. Patricia Lund, a human geneticist who has dedicated her career to researching and presenting information on oculocutaneous albinism in Africa, claims "African cultures often embrace the supernatural rather than the scientific or medical [realm,]" and "are more concerned with cures than

⁴⁸"Murder for profit; The killing of albinos," *The Economist* 419, (2016): 54.

preventative measures,” a problematic condemnation of the ways in which an entire continent operates its medical care system.⁴⁹

Outside reports are not the only sources critical of African response to albinism, however. Several Africans academics have published papers detailing their experiences, and are unafraid to criticize the current system. Dr. Elvis Imafidon, an African scholar and professor with albinism, is particularly notorious for condemning traditional African society’s treatment of PWA. He commonly references the notion of ‘ubuntu’ in his writing, an African philosophical value that encourages humanity to come together as one.⁵⁰ Imafidon is critical of the advocacy for the “all-inclusive nature of African ontology,” which emphasizes the importance of every individual because it directly contradicts the treatment of PWA and other alienated groups, such as “twins, triplets” and other babies born from multiple births, and “morally bankrupt persons,” a term that, according to Imafidon, is subject to the interpretation of whomever is using it.⁵¹ These people may be excluded from the coverage of ubuntu because a belief remains that their presence is so disruptive, that there is no way society can operate harmoniously with them in it. Due to the acceptance of such, violence and murder may not be regarded as criminal. Therefore, an apparent cognitive dissonance exists in the public acceptance of PWA; the theoretical fulfillment of ubuntu does not equal the actual praxis.

Maureen Mswela, another African scholar, is even more critical of the circumstances involving PWA that are occurring on the continent; while Imafidon expresses hope for the return of ubuntu, Mswela states “there clearly is no room for the age-old concept of humanness [of ubuntu]” in episodes of “such violent behaviors.”⁵² She goes on to discuss the typical lifestyle of

⁴⁹Gaigher and Lund, “A health intervention programme for children with albinism at a special school in South Africa,” 370.

⁵⁰Elvis Imafidon. “Dealing with the other between the ethical and the moral: albinism on the African continent,” *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 38, (2017): 177.

⁵¹Ibid, 166.

⁵²Mswela, “Violent attacks against persons with albinism in South Africa: A human right perspective,” 118.

African children, who are “notoriously exposed” to rampant poverty and abuse, referencing the presence of child soldiers and prostitutes, early marriages, and gender discrimination, stereotypes perpetuated about Africa since colonial powers first began exploiting the continent.⁵³ Mswela’s unrelenting condemnation of Africa is not necessarily linked to albinism and the treatment of PWA, as it examines several issues facing Africa; additionally, she herself does not have albinism like Imafidon. However, her positionality as a South African scholar with a specialty in health and human rights extends to a number of papers written on the legal treatment of people with albinism.

Collis Machoko, a researcher and professor from Zimbabwe, is another knowledgeable commentator on the albinism experience in Africa. According to Machoko, Zimbabwe and other areas of Africa ritualized the public killings of babies with albinism, claiming this practice ceased due to the presence of Christian missionaries; it is difficult to access data to such rituals, especially from the pre-colonial era.⁵⁴ Regardless of the verifiability of this statement, it is difficult to maintain an unaffected sense of cultural relativism for such acts, especially when these alarming practices are exposed and subsequently condemned by the key informants of the research population. Such an issue is a major problem when conducting research solely based on the conflicting literature of others, rather than through direct observation.

The vast majority of the research conducted on albinism examines the condition from a medical or biological perspective, and it is largely directed by Western-led non-governmental organizations (NGOs).⁵⁵ While several of these NGOs have created effective policy for aiding PWA, these programs are not necessarily cross-cultural and tend to better represent Europeans and other Westerners with albinism than for people in Africa, Latin America, and Asia,

⁵³Ibid, 130.

⁵⁴Machoko, “Albinism: A Life of Ambiguity,” 319.

⁵⁵Reimer-Kirkham, “Albinism, spiritual and cultural practices, and implications for health, healthcare, and human rights,” 764.

suggesting a lack of continuity in the albinism experience. There is a huge gap concerning the discourse and knowledge of the “socio-cultural dynamics” of albinism, a subject deserving of more study in order to understand albinism better beyond its biological characteristics.⁵⁶

Additionally, the majority of the accessible sources on albinism today reflect the opinions of politicians, leaders, and government officials who do not have albinism. However, there is growing discourse from the albino community, contributing firsthand accounts and testimonies to the public sphere.

Dr. Jean Burke states that one group notably absent from the literature on albinism in Africa is “the voices of those suspected of driving the attacks, such as traditional witchdoctors, members of the... elite, and business people seeking quick wealth.”⁵⁷ While some critics may argue that giving perpetrators a platform might increase the chances of violence, Burke’s suggestion is not completely unfounded; understanding the true motives of the upper-class funding these operations and rumors is a relatively unknown perspective that may offer valuable insights, and deserves consideration. In Africa, “elites are awarded a special status in society. When they speak, even if their claims are unfounded, masses listen and act upon their requests to peacefully fulfill the principles of ubuntu,” suggesting that elite figures are assumed to be the pinnacle of morality and intelligence as well as a trustworthy source.⁵⁸ Therefore, when the elite harbor a violent position towards people with albinism, other community members follow. Ideas about disability as the perversion of humanity are consequently passed down through multiple generations.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Burke, John-Langba, and Kaijage, “Media Analysis of Albino Killings in Tanzania: A Social Work and Human Rights Perspective,” 122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2014.895398>

⁵⁸Elvis Imafidon. “Some Epistemological Issues in the Othering of Persons with Albinism in Africa,” *Handbook of African Philosophy of Difference* (2020): 369. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14835-5_18

Stigma

As aforementioned, early disability discourse was dominated by Erving Goffman's theory of stigma and spoiled identity. While some of his points remain valuable, his general ideology has not withstood the test of time. In his work, Goffman explains that visible differences between human beings expose affected individuals to increased stigmatization. While relevant in some sense, Goffman's outdated and problematic language choices, such as phrases like "abominations in the body," are not currently acceptable or used contemporarily to categorize people with disabilities.⁵⁹ Goffman states that some of the main differences between humans that cause tension (outside of the so-called physical deformities) are mental illnesses, misbehavior, and more obvious visible identifiers, such as race or gender. According to Goffman's theory, PWA are more likely to suffer from a "double stigma" since skin color would be grouped within the "racial" tensions and other symptoms of the disability, like visual impairment, would be classified as "physical deformities."⁶⁰ Double stigma significantly raises the risk of mistreatment and alienation. The "stigmatized individual is often viewed as less than human" due to the horns effect, a psychological study stressing the importance of physical beauty in order to gain preferential treatment.⁶¹

Ultimately, if visibility is a crucial factor of stigma, then the apparent signs of albinism would easily lead to discrimination. Other parts of Goffman's theory should be disregarded in their entirety, such as his claim that the human "norm" is a cisgender, heteronormative, able-minded and able-bodied individual; these standards blame people for their own mental, physical, and social struggles in facing societal limitations. Modern disability studies highlight the idea that societal expectations are the real culprit in othering and shaming those with

⁵⁹Nathalie Wan, "'Orange in a World of Apples': The voices of albinism," *Disability and Society* 18 (2003): 279-280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0968759032000052860>

⁶⁰Ibid, 282.

⁶¹Ibid, 281.

disabilities; the so-called “normals” of a community prevent true equity by refusing to remove long-standing discriminatory barriers. This is exemplified in every facet of life; school children with albinism may not be allowed to sit closer to the board in their classroom in order to see properly, making it difficult to remain engaged and understand or retain the lesson being taught. When these children fall behind in the system, they are blamed for their own inattention, rather than the inequitable conditions they are forced to operate within. Therefore, the “normal” society must be held responsible for not providing a more inclusive environment.

As previously mentioned, “passing” is a social phenomenon that assists in reducing the chances of being “othered;” Goffman’s theory suggests that people with disabilities rarely try to better their positionality in society, and only undertake passive attempts at gaining social acceptance rather than wholeheartedly resisting. Within the realm of disability studies exists two phenomena, labeled as the “barriers to being” and “barriers to doing.” Barriers to being are “social processes and practices that can negatively affect wellbeing” while barriers to doing are “socio-structural... restrictions,” and both kinds of barriers are the societal response to a disabled person’s abilities and lifestyle choices.⁶²

⁶²Bradbury-Jones, Franklin, Lund, and Taylor, “Children with albinism in African regions,” 3.

Language Choices

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that language choices affect one's thoughts and perceptions. For example, "name-calling terms shape understandings of the bodies of persons with a disability within a community," leading to potential feelings of self-hatred and embarrassment; similarly, "derogatory terms for people with a disability express how a community perceives them as less than human," justifying persecution.⁶³ As referenced earlier, PWA might be called "Geoffrey Zigoma" or "white man." While these names may sound harmless, repeated usage of these kinds of terms can have malicious implications. When impoverished Black individuals with albinism are mockingly compared to white Westerners solely due to the color of their skin, the assumption stands that they receive the inherent privileges that accompany whiteness, which could not be a further deviation from the truth. "Mzungu" is the most commonly used word to describe PWA, and it holds a similar meaning, (normally reserved for those with white skin) "someone who is of high status," which is again seemingly contradictory when the position of PWA within society is often one of disadvantage.⁶⁴ One particular slur, "dili," is considered extremely offensive. The word means "deal," but when used in reference to PWA, it is contextually understood as the "commercial value of body parts."⁶⁵

Therefore, this terminology debases PWA as profitable entities rather than human beings. Albino bodies are commodified, and media reports often make these situations even worse. For example, published articles might list the monetary value of body parts, ranging from hair and fingernails to entire limbs and torsos.⁶⁶ This itemized listing could encourage more people to

⁶³Brocco, "Labeling albinism," 1149.

⁶⁴Braathen, "Albinism in Malawi," 605.

⁶⁵Bradbury-Jones, Lund, and Taylor. "Witchcraft-related Abuse and Murder of Children with Albinism," 21.

⁶⁶Burke, et all. "Media Analysis of Albino Killings in Tanzania," 127.

undertake violent actions in order to make quick money. In their haste to condemn such cruelty, the media actually heightens the risks of violence against PWA.

Conclusion

The process of identity-formulation for Africans with albinism is made difficult by the “racial” and ability-based differences perceived by outsiders. PWA face challenges as soon as they are born; their ability to survive the potentially devastated reaction of a parent or healthcare provider can be a matter of life or death moments after entering the world. These confrontations proceed throughout childhood in and out of school, and complicate employment opportunities and romantic relationships for adults. The stigmatization of albinism may even follow a PWA after the end of his or her life, with rumors like the death myth. It is evident that numerous factors contribute to the struggles of identity-building for a PWA, and considering the essential nature of identity, it is important to understand what those barriers are, and how they can be removed.

Additionally, it is essential to remember that the majority of popular literature on albinism in Africa sensationalizes the public response to the disability to sell stories, with no interest in funding the advocacy for PWA by supporting locally-led efforts. The fake outrage Western media produces continuously spouts the message that Africa is somehow less advanced and more barbarous than any other place in the world. This approach does nothing for African people with disabilities, aside from further othering them— titling them as perpetual victims of their environment. This research intends to present a wide-range of diverse sources to uncover the true challenges people with albinism face in response to their identity. It was impossible to create a bibliography without repeatedly encountering sources linking the correlation between witchcraft and violence towards PWA. In reality, there is a much deeper set of causations

resulting in the reception of people with albinism, one that does not differ greatly from any other region in the world. While ideas of witchcraft were mentioned within this research, they were only examined to judge their impact on identity formulation, not to decide who is to blame for the trafficking of albino body parts.

Regarding the potential for future work on the topic, it would be advantageous to travel to Africa and formulate ethnographic research through the observation and discussion with people with albinism, as well as their families, friends, school teachers, local politicians, police officers, and medical staff. Additionally, it would be encouraging to speak and collaborate with some of the existing subject experts, such as Elvis Imafidon, frequently cited throughout this work. The perceptions of identity analyzed here are subject to change with the exposure of new observations; no research involving people is ever truly complete, as human beings continue to shift and evolve.

Regardless, it was an honor to read and watch the confessions of people with albinism, who are in no way responsible for educating the able-minded and able-bodied community on the albinism experience, yet summoned the bravery to tell their individual stories in hopes of creating a kinder and better-informed future.

References

- “Ambassador for Malawi’s albinos,” *BBC News* (2006). Accessed on 12 Feb. 2021.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5009190.stm>
- Ashade, Marina. “Why Do Mothers Care More About Their Children Than Fathers,” *Psychology Today*, (2014). Accessed on 1 March 2021.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/dollars-and-sex/201401/why-do-mothers-care-more-about-their-children-fathers>
- Baker, Charlotte “The myths surrounding people with albinism in South Africa and Zimbabwe,” *Journal of African Culture Studies* 22, no. 2 (2010): 169-181.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2010.491412>
- Bradbury-Jones, Caroline, Franklin, Anita, Lund, Patricia, and Julie Taylor. “Children with albinism in African regions: their rights to ‘being’ and ‘doing,’” *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 18, no. 2 (2018) <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-018-0144-8>
- Bradbury-Jones, Caroline, Lund, Patricia, and Julie Taylor. "Witchcraft-related Abuse and Murder of Children with Albinism in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Conceptual Review," *Child Abuse Review* 28, no. 1 (2019): 13-26. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2549>
- Braathen, Stine Hellum. “Albinism in Malawi: knowledge and beliefs from an African setting,” *Disability and Society* 21, no. 6 (2006): 599-611. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590600918081>
- Brocco, Giorgio. “Labeling albinism: language and discourse surrounding people with albinism in Tanzania,” *Disability and Society* 30, no. 8 (2015)
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2015.1075869>
- Burke, Jean, John-Langba, Johannes, and Theresa J. Kaijage. “Media Analysis of Albino Killings in Tanzania: A Social Work and Human Rights Perspective,” *Ethics and Social Welfare* 8, no. 2 (2014): 117-134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2014.895398>
- Gaigher, Retha and Patricia Lund. “A health intervention programme for children with albinism at a special school in South Africa,” *Health Education Research* 17, no. 3 (2002): 365-372.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/her/17.3.365>
- Imafidon, Elvis. “Dealing with the other between the ethical and the moral: albinism on the African continent,” *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 38, (2017): 163-177.
<https://doi-org.proxy.lib.utc.edu/10.1007/s11017-017-9403-2>
- Imafidon, Elvis. “Some Epistemological Issues in the Othering of Persons with Albinism in Africa,” *Handbook of African Philosophy of Difference* (2020): 361-378.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14835-5_18

- Machoko, Collis Garikai. "Albinism: A Life of Ambiguity- A Zimbabwean Experience," *African Identities* 11, no. 1 (2013): 318-333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2013.838896>
- Medline Plus. "Albinism," *US National Library of Medicine*. Accessed on 12 Feb. 2021. <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001479.htm>
- Mswela, Maureen. "Violent attacks against persons with albinism in South Africa: A human right perspective," *African Human Rights Law Journal* 17, no. 1 (2017) <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/1996-2096/2017/v17n1a6>
- "Murder for profit; The killing of albinos," *The Economist* 419, no. 8993 (2016): 54. <https://proxy.lib.utc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.lib.utc.edu/magazines/murder-profit-killing-albinos/docview/1795591095/se-2?accountid=14767>
- Nyamu, Irene K. "Competing Intergenerational Perspectives of Living with Albinism in Kenya and their Implications for Children's Lives," *Childhood* 26, no. 4 (2020): 435-449: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568220931580>
- Ojilere, Aloy and Saleh, Muhammad M. "Violation of Dignity and Life: Challenges and Prospects for Women and Girls with Albinism in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* 4, no. 3 (2019): 147-155. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-018-0085-0>
- Possi, Abdallah and Ally. "The identity question versus appropriateness of legal anti-discrimination measures: Endorsing the disability rights approach to albinism," *African Disability Rights Yearbook* no. 5 (2017): 118-140. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3070933>
- Reimer-Kirkham, Sheryl. "Albinism, spiritual and cultural practices, and implications for health, healthcare, and human rights: a scoping review," *Disability and Society* 34, no. 5 (2019): 747-774. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1566051>
- Snowden, Frank M. *Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present*. New Haven: Yale, 2019.
- Wan, Nathalie. "'Orange in a World of Apples': The voices of albinism," *Disability and Society* 18, no. 3 (2003): 277-296. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0968759032000052860>
- White and Black: Crimes of Color*. Directed by Jean Francois Mean. Cité Amérique Productions, 2010. *Culture Unplugged*, www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/10699/White-and-Black--Crimes-of-Color
- White, Luise. *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000.
- World Heritage Encyclopedia. "Passing," *Project Gutenberg*. Accessed on 22 Jan. 2021, [http://www.self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Passing_\(sociology\)](http://www.self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Passing_(sociology))