

## Temporalities in Depigmentation Practices

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**Abstract:** This text proposes an analysis of the temporalities involved in voluntary depigmentation practices. The study took place in the district "Sokoura" of Bouaké city, Côte d'Ivoire in 2016. Semi-structured individual and focus group interviews were conducted with a variety of social actors: practitioners of depigmentation, non-practitioners, former practitioners, sellers and manufacturers of lightening products, pharmacists and dermatologists. Research shows that practitioners use specific methods of application of products, depending on time. Representation of body interacts with a representation of the toxicity of lightening products, which in turn contributes to the unequal mobilization of time by the user in his "body techniques".

**Keywords:** Depigmentation - lightening products - body - social practices - temporalities - Côte d'Ivoire.

### INTRODUCTION

Voluntary depigmentation is widespread throughout the world, particularly in African countries, where it concerns certain cities and the majority of the female population [1-3]. In this part of the world, the issue of voluntary depigmentation does not appear to be a public health priority despite the adverse effects of lightening products on health. This practice, as Petit [4] points out, has an addictive dimension.

It manifests itself as a constraint, characterized by the impossibility for the practitioners to get rid of them, despite the significant problems associated with skin blanching. The clinical experience described by the author shows that even when they suffer from unpleasant side effects, severe and multiple complications, practitioners feel compelled to continue or even amplify the use of lightening products. As for Didillon *et al.*, [5] who conducted a study on the issue in Congo Brazaville, they perceive the extension of this practice, in addition to the related racial complex factor, as a matter of fashion. According to them, the media and the many advertisements of lightening products valorising excessively the clear skin, incite the youth to follow the fashion. Another cause of the development of this phenomenon, according to Kébé *et al.*, [6], is to be sought in certain social norms and cultural practices. That is to say, considerations related to the ceremonies of baptism and marriage, the influence of the group, friends and relatives, etc.

In Côte d'Ivoire, joining the thesis of the racial complex, Oulai-Kouakou [7], mentions an inferiority

complex, acculturation and enculturation, influenced by Western culture. It does not fail to mention poverty as well.

The practice of depigmentation in Bouaké in the center of the country is experiencing real growth. An exploration was conducted in one of the city's districts, serving as a study site for this research. Observation of people in public places reveals many individuals with visibly thinning skins. Often pink, semi-clear, semi-black, spotted with buds, etc., the skins have imperfections that attract attention. They suggest the use by several people of products with corrosive effect.

In the literature, epidemiological and psychological studies have been carried out. They highlight the health consequences and the determinants of the phenomenon [8, 2, 9]. Rare are the works based on a theoretical sociological anchoring. Studies focusing on the temporal techniques of application of the products on the body, are practically non-existent. However, the findings made in the study site suggest

strategies for using lightening products that involve temporal logics. We are seeing various methods of application. They are often made of mixtures of products, as well as application techniques linked to time (long-term / short / diversified application time, heat / freshness, etc.). The practitioners seem to give the temporal sequences a major place, in the different processes of application of the products. Time thus appears as an important parameter in the analysis of depigmentation practices.

The present study focuses on the various methods of application of lightening products, which necessarily take time into account. This text highlights the significant value of "time", its crucial importance, in the use of lightening products.

### Theoretical framework of research

As Bessin [10] put it, "*The temporal dimension is at the basis of the reflections of researchers working on biography. The different temporalities at work in the life course must be declined, notably underlining the articulation between the temporalities of the individual and the historical time in which they are registered. At the heart of this dialectic of the social sciences are several fields of analysis which leave a greater or lesser place to the subjectivity of individuals and to the narrative they make of their existence*". There are various definitions and approaches to time and temporalities in several social sciences: history, sociology, social psychology, demography, sociolinguistics, and a philosophical and epistemological perspective [11]. Dubar and Rolle [11] quote various authors each with his definitional approach. They mention Lallement [12] according to

which, temporalities must be thought of in a register of analysis that combines the collective and the plural. They speak of Bloch [13], who emphasizes that time is the place of intelligibility of phenomena. For this author also, temporalities have a collective origin. They are "frameworks" providing common benchmarks, they are "pluralistic" as are the human groups that produce them through their actions. They report the viewpoint of Hatzfeld [14], who consider that temporalities are as "maps", allowing us to understand and identify the links between the present and the past.

In addition to the mobilization of theoretical approaches to temporalities, the present text sometimes makes use of other approaches for the analysis of certain specific data. They are: the sociology of the body, the social construction of risk, the theory of the diffusion of innovations.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### Study site

The study was conducted in the town of Bouaké, the second largest city in Côte d'Ivoire, mainly in the Sokoura district. Located in the center-east (see map), Sokoura is one of the great districts of the city. Its population is predominantly Malinké. Located near the Great Mosque of Bouaké, Sokoura has a private pharmacy, three primary schools, a maternal and child care center and a large market. In this market we were able to observe the presence of several stalls selling cosmetics in addition to other items (foodstuffs, clothing, etc.), shops and stores. We were interested in shops and stores that sell cosmetics. There are also hairdressers in and around the market, as well as elsewhere in the neighborhood.



Map: Location of Sokoura district of Bouaké

In this area, lightening ointments are displayed and sold both in the showcases of beauty salons as well as in market places, by land, and at the pharmacy.

Markets are for the most destitute customers, ideal places to have something to beautify. They are most often easily accessible sales areas. Women, girls,

adolescents and even young men seem in no way to deprive themselves of it. Overpriced on the market stalls and also offered by street vendors, these products are not uncommon. Generally exposed to the sun or under an umbrella, shelves on wooden shelves, often on the ground or transported in wheelbarrows, the lightening products circulate in the markets of Sokoura.

In beauty salons these products are arranged by categories. The sale of lightening products in these spaces intended for the beautification of the skin is perceived both inside and outside the premises. They are apparently well presented and better protected, by plastic bags and an umbrella. They are presented in order to reassure and show customers the different qualities of products recently manufactured and to attract customers. Among the products exposed, the lighteners are in excess and sell better.

Singularly, pharmacies are places of sale of lightening products manufactured by the cosmetic industries, but there are also products obtained in an artisanal way. The Sokoura district has only one private pharmacy named "Pharmacie Sokoura". We were able to observe clients who often come for cases of illness or signs of illness such as malaria, headaches, body aches, vomiting, etc. In these places, the clientele involved in lightening products comes for a case of pathology related to depigmentation or for advice on the choice and use of a lightening product. In the Sokoura pharmacy and in all the other pharmacies in the city, the lightening products sold are considered the best, and not

aggressive to the skin. Depigmentation practitioners with a fairly consistent income prefer these products. The presence of lightening products in these places can be noticed without difficulty. These are placed on the front shelves and behind the counter, as to be more easily accessible to customers.

Another type of marketing of cosmetic products is seen in Sokoura. People, with one or two sachets in their hands, containing for the most of time products of all kinds, walk about here and there, from house to house, to publicize the sale of their products, which are for the most part enlightening. For these people, outpatient sales are a means of facilitating transportation to the customer, who would benefit from free home delivery in addition to the privilege of obtaining the newly manufactured and effective cosmetic product in terms of embellishment. Many customers love these lightening products that are newly designed and often imported.

As for the cosmetics shops, there are massively and the majority is specialized in the sale of lightening products, in the town of Bouaké. Sokoura has a single market, where you can find shops selling cosmetics. Most of these sales outlets are located in this sector, and some traders sell other types of products (non-lightening). In Sokoura we can estimate five or eight small cosmetics shops and three ones that are moderately constructed. Some smaller shops, which are constructed of materials such as wooden plates or containers, are located within the market



**Photo n ° 1: Cosmetics sold on market stalls**

Cliché: Soro S., July 19th, 2016

Photo showing products sold in the market of Sokoura. The example of a point of sale consisting of a table (on which the products are laid) and an umbrella (supposed to protect them against the sun). Various lightening products can be seen. These are remarkable in the photo by the orange color of the range Caro white / Carotone, a product commonly used by practitioners.

These lighteners are exposed a little higher on the shelves as to better notice them. There are also non-cosmetic items; these include: toothbrushes, toothpastes stored underneath, hair ointments located just above toothpastes, talcum, and fragrant lotions for adults and children placed on the sides and often peeling on the shelves.



**Photo n ° 2: Shop of lightening, non-lightening products and miscellaneous articles**

Cliché: Soro S., 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2016

This photo shows one of the shops selling lightening products in Sokoura. Large quantities of lighteners are sold in addition to other items. At the entrance to the shop are disposable diapers for child packed in a plastic bag, cardboard, cotton, deodorants just below the small sign (Lea), and more below, bottles of deodorant perfume. Above these items are children's talc, braid material, various qualities of lightening and non-brightening soaps. Inside the shop, on the left and in a showcase, are exposed several lightening products. This shop in addition to the retail, offers of wholesale

Sometimes in the vicinity and within the neighborhood. They are narrow and some products are often placed on the floor in packages.

On the doors of some shops and boutiques, posters are posted, promoting the lightening cosmetic products. Some posters show products made by the cosmetics industries, while others seek to attract customers through advertising related to traditional lightening products.

#### **Selection and number of populations to study**

The snowball technique was used. It consisted in identifying and interrogating within the studied population a first individual practicing the depigmentation. At the end of the interview with this first person, indications on two others were obtained. Thus, through the interviewees, we were recommended by designation, persons involved in depigmentation, non-practitioners, former practitioners and vendors and manufacturers of these products. We have nevertheless taken care to vary the age and gender of the respondents. Thus, we questioned:

- Seventeen people doing depigmentation including six by focus group (3 men and 3 women), nine using in-depth semi-structured interviews (6 women and 3 men), two by life story (1 man and 1 woman).

- Nine former practitioners including six by focus group (3 men and 3 women), two using in-depth semi-structured interviews (1 man and 1 woman), and one by life story (1 woman).
- Eight non-practitioners with six by focus group (3 men and 3 women) and two using in-depth semi-structured interviews (1 man and 1 woman).
- Two sellers of cosmetic products (1 man and 1 woman) using in-depth semi-structured interviews.
- Two health workers by in-depth semi-structured interview.

A total of 3 focus groups with a total of 18 participants, 17 in-depth semi-structured interviews and 3 life stories. Among these research participants, 12/17 are women versus 3/17 who are male. The average age is 28 years, the minimum age is 15 years and the maximum age is 57 years. Women averaged 21 years and men 19 years.

#### **Methods and tools for collecting data**

Several methods of data collection have been used: semi-directive in-depth interview, life story, focus group and direct observation. As tools were used in addition to the interview guides and the direct observation grid: a digital recorder (to record the field data), the field log (to note any relevant detail), as well as the photo option of the mobile phone (for photographs of people practicing depigmentation and packaging of cosmetic products).

#### **Conduct of the investigation**

The field investigation took place from the 16<sup>th</sup> of May to the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2016. It was marked by some difficulties. These were related to the reluctance of some respondents, judging the subject very sensitive. The photographs of the harmful effects of the lightening products on the skin of the practitioners were denied to us for shame. Access to practitioners has sometimes required interventions from the Malinke community

leader in the Sokoura neighborhood for outreach. Gifts such as pieces of soap and powdered soap were distributed to motivate the respondents to participate in the exchange. We also bought several products such as soap, ointment, shampoo, straightener (which we used as a photography item), to make us accept by the owners of shops of cosmetics.

### **Data processing**

The field data recorded in a newspaper and recorded in a tape recorder were transcribed and analyzed using the thematic content method.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Consent was obtained from all respondents prior to any interview, or recording. In order to establish confidence at all levels, it was essential that the interview session with the entire study population, especially practitioners, former practitioners and non-practitioners, be done in a relaxed atmosphere. Thus, the place where the interview took place was each time neutral and pleasant, in order to clear up any ambiguity. In addition, focusing on the focus group interview, at the beginning of the session, the principle and questions of this interview were presented to the participants. Furthermore, in order to thank all participants present for their availability, soap and biscuits were offered to them. Respect for anonymity and all opinions was a must. Fictive names were given to all participants in this research.

### **Depigmentation and temporalities**

#### **Moments of the day, seasons and application of lightening products**

The methods and techniques for applying the lightening products by the users are pluralistic. Some give prominence to time during product application. Their arrangement takes into account the different phases of the day (morning / afternoon / evening), or the different climatic seasons of the year (harmattan / rainy / dry season). Murielle, whose purpose is here reported, belongs to this category of people:

*"I only ointment myself at night with Caro White oil. The day I mix the oil in the milk and that's what I use. At night there is no sun so I use to use only the oil so that it can take the body well."*

Mauricette, seamstress, also proceeds in a similar way: *"I mix Caro White and then CT +, I mix well and then I rub myself with it, that's for the day; at night I mix both their oils, and then I rub myself with. But often also during the harmattan I have my soap apart and my ointment. When it's harmattan it's cold so when you're rubbing, it's easy too!"*

These products cited by the respondent are among the most popular product categories of practitioners. Newly designed and containing high-

lightening doses, they only need to be used in a short time to achieve the desired result, that is to say a complexion completely cleared. What makes these products special is that in addition to being particularly effective in terms of thinning ("it takes easily" to borrow the phrase from practitioners' jargon), they would give a uniform, no-stain and inexpensive complexion. Some practitioners mobilize the products they use according to the time of day or the weather: day or night; in a period of harmattan (coolness) or in a dry period (heat). An important element of time emerges in this practice: the opposition between hot and cold weather. The products used during the warm period are less aggressive compared to the products used during the cooler period. From the viewpoint of the practitioners, the sun (heat) has a negative impact on a skin painted with lightening products. This negative impact occurs through the appearance of burns (blackish or often pinkish spots) on the skin. But also and above all explain some users, the sun by the warming of the skin coated with lightening product, is the source of large stretch marks and bad body odors. This is why products used in hot periods would be those that are less aggressive in terms of thinning. It is this same logic that guides the behavior of practitioners who opt for different products whether day or night. Compared to warm periods, cool periods are preferred. During these times of the year, practitioners use the most effective lightening products, in order to obtain quickly the desired result, but above all to have a uniform complexion that they say is made excellent in time of freshness. According to the users, the freshness makes the skin stronger and more resistant to the aggressive effects of the lightening products, in contrast to the heat which makes it weaker and vulnerable. As for the products, the freshness gives them a continuous efficiency and a more beautiful appearance (in terms of color) contrary to the hot periods which sometimes alter the color or even the quality of the product.

Finally, the practitioners are characterized by two lines. These are: caution during warm periods and maximization of enlightenment efforts during the cool period. These attitudes reveal a sort of calculation carried out by the social actor. This can be summarized as follows: the choice of the right product or the product adapted to the weather prevailing.

### **Some parts of the body before or without others**

In some cases, the use or application of the products is done gradually, favoring certain parts of the body (intensification of application on one organ or application on some organs first before others). In other cases, parts of the body are totally excluded from the depigmentation operation. In both possibilities, the different parts of the privileged body (which are the object of depigmentation) are more or less the feet, the toes, the thighs, the knees, the elbows, the fingers, the back and the contours of the eyes. This selection is due

to the simple reason that these parts of the body would be difficult to lighten. They are characterized by a high resistance to the lightening effect of the products compared to the other parts.

Let us look at the first scenario. These are some practitioners like Francine, who seek the lightening of certain parts of the body before others. They proceed step by step:

*"For the black people like us like naturally, when you use your ointment you must start with the feet to climb towards your back and elbows. I start with my feet, I rub it for at least two months and when the product takes well my feet I continue on my body. We do it like this so we do not have two colors of skin, black, yellow ...".*

Practitioners, who, like Francine, consider parts of the body as priorities devote to these parts a length of time of up to two, three or even four months depending on the expected result.

If certain organs are placed in the first position, the time devoted to each privileged organ is not always the same. It varies from one privileged organ to another. The fragility of the part of the body concerned is a very important criterion here. In fact, the fragile parts such as the belly, the face, the thighs, etc. do not require a long duration of application time. In contrast, difficult parts such as elbows, fingers, feet, toes, knees and back, etc.) require a long period of application.

In the second case, parts of the body such as the belly and the chest are not subject to the application of lightening agents. These singular parts of the body are preserved because they are perceived as very fragile. For the practitioners concerned, therefore, applications are not made over the entire body. By way of illustration, Juliette explains here how it proceeds when applying the lightening products:

*"For my complexion to be neat like that, I start with my feet first! I rub for two, three months like that! When the ointment ends up taking my feet, now I can start on the other parts of my body. So I first start by my feet; and then I do not rub my stomach and then my breasts because you must have techniques ooh! Because the products are too strong so it makes the skin weak. So when it's like this you have to know where you have to put and then where you have to leave! Anyway, that's how I do it."*

These practitioners have a major concern: to preserve the health of certain precise parts of the body considered too fragile. This reflects the fact that these users are aware of the risks they face with depigmentation. However, they feel that some organs

are more exposed than others. There is a construction of the fragility of the body or part of the body that is made from the perception of the corrosive effect of the products, coupled with an appreciation of the appearance of the skin in certain parts of the body. These perceptions influence the action of practitioners on their body, in terms of application of lightening products.

The theory of the social construction of risk makes it possible to account for the interest given to the effectiveness of the products and the precautions for use related to the health risks in the actors [15]. Van Nuffelen [16] cited by Kermisch [17] involves the notions of habitus and field proper to Bourdieu, in the social construction of risk. The way in which an individual apprehends a risk depends on his position in the field to which he belongs and the habitus peculiar to that field.

In the living environment of practitioners of depigmentation, a part of the body such as the belly, for example, is distinguished from the others if one considers the surgical operations to which it can be subjected. To avoid the inability to sew the skin when surgery occurs, practitioners prefer to limit the risks. Thus, the actor does not seem to practice depigmentation with the intention of destroying his body. He has no intention of destroying it, but rather of embellishing it. As to elucidate this thesis, practitioners, on the contrary, perceive the risk and take precautions to avoid health problems. This way of privileging certain parts of the body before or without others, allows for the management of health risks in depigmentation practices.

#### **New and old product: when users change products**

The practitioners of the depigmentation are in search of the miracle product. Many change product regularly. They are looking for a more efficient product, after only one or two weeks, at most one month of first use. Their wish is to innovate. This is what explains Corine, a student and practitioner of depigmentation. According to the girl, the manufacturers of cosmetics would be benefactors. They put on sale a variety of products and constantly supply the market with innovative products:

*"Anyway I say people should think of us eh! As the days pass the technology evolves, why not us? And even if it's often expensive to try the newly released product every time, I prefer it, compared to seeing my complexion deteriorate. If I use a product today and my salesperson calls me if there are more powerful novelties, I change out of ointment!"*

These remarks reveal a triptych that accounts for the practitioners' logic of recourse to the novelties. This involves the quest for efficacy or the ability of

products to achieve the goal of strongly lightening the skin. Then there is the concern to maintain the light color of the skin, so a struggle not to lose or degrade. Finally, beyond the constancy in the lightening of the skin, there appeared in filigree a taste pronounced for perfection, a better embellishment. These ideas are seen in the reference to the power of the products "more powerful novelties", to the refusal to see its clear skin deteriorate "... I prefer it, compared to see my complexion degrade", then the evocation of technological progress that is supposed to be synonymous with aesthetic progress "technology evolves, why not us?" The practitioners then place themselves in a position of people who are on the lookout for new things, with the hope that they are more effective.

This involves Rogers' current diffusion and innovation theory. First, because Rogers' definition of innovation is in perfect harmony with the way in which the users of lightening products do. According to Rogers:

*"An innovation is an idea, a practice or an object considered new by an individual or a group ... It is the novelty as perceived by the individual or group that determines his or her behavior. If the idea seems new to the individual and the group it is an innovation". [18].*

What attracts the practitioners of the depigmentation of our site of study is the novelty of the objects that constitute the depigmenting products. Second, this result of our study highlights a category of users identified by Rogers in its diffusion curve of an innovation. Rogers points out that in the process of its dissemination, there are five categories of users [19]. Not everyone adopts innovation at the same time, and the audience for innovation is increasingly moving from the first group to the next. They are: innovators, early adopters or early users, early majority, late majority and latecomers. Innovators are the quickest to try a novelty put on the market. They are on the lookout, jumping on the novelty as soon as it comes on the market. Early adopters are also sensitive to novelty, quickly adhere to it and share their opinions with those around them. But they are endowed with a certain critical spirit. The early majority groups together the people who need information about the very first experiences of use before deciding. The late majority groups together individuals who need great evidence of novelty effectiveness. They generally adopt an innovation after a large section of the population has experienced it. The skepticism that characterizes them leads to a slow pace of adherence to innovation. Latecomers are resistant to change and are therefore the last to take an interest in innovation. There is no doubt that the users of depigmentation who are on the lookout for new products, are innovators. They do not hesitate to run to their seller to buy and use the new products. They also

do not skimp on financial means "even if it's often expensive to try the new product every time, I prefer that." The novelty, worthwhile, one might be tempted to say.

Third, the factors that influence the decision of innovators in depigmentation can be sought in the characteristics of an innovation, as listed by Rogers. It summarizes the characteristics of an innovation in five attributes, namely: its relative advantage, its compatibility with the values of the group of belonging, its complexity, the possibility to test it and its visibility [19]. In our case, the characteristics of the lightening products that seem to influence the decision of innovators are their perceived relative advantage and visibility. Indeed, it seems that in these people the new lightening products are perceived to be better compared to the previous ones (relative advantage) and the benefit to the user, namely a skin with clarity maintained or even better thinning, is sufficiently clear to the user (visibility). That said, the action of distributors and sellers of lightening products is also to be taken into account among the factors influencing the decision of the users. Mr. Koné, a lightening agent trader at the Sokoura market, says:

*"My dear, that's where we eat, oh! So we like it! Or am I telling lie? When new product comes, we make a lot of money, because when it comes this way we assume that it is even better than what was there before; so the price also increases. We take them and just add some francs for a little benefit! When the customers come they take my number and then they tell me if there is novelty to call them. Also they use the product within 4 days, 1 week, 1 month often it depends yo know! In any case nowadays everyone wants novelty! "*

To the analysis of these remarks of merchant, it seems to take shape a kind of social construction of the representation of the effectiveness of the products. Here, novelty is used as a guarantee of efficiency and this image is maintained by strategies of actors aiming to show a qualitative difference of the new product with the old ones. This difference is indicated in particular by the increase in the price of the goods first by the manufacturer and then by the merchant. And the users who are in a position of watch, seem to be satisfied, since Corine establishes a good value for money, in favor of the use of new products.

#### **For the speed of effect of the product**

The following recipes were revealed by the respondents, among several tricks to facilitate the speed of skin lightening. Bleach and lemon, powerful bleachers, are used in bath water, directly on the skin at night at bedtime, or added to the ointment (cream or body milk). Motor oil and acid water, superb cleaners, are mixed and often used by practitioners all over the body in order to accelerate the lightening of the skin.

Shards of bottles are sometimes added to creams or body milk, in order to scrape the skin and let the product act. Wall scrapers and cement, used in the construction of buildings, are also used to scrape the skin or remove it to better make act the product that will be applied thereafter. Other users can buy cosmetic products of local or African manufacture (milk, creams, pomades, soaps). These products are based on hydroquinone, mercury and dermocorticoids [20] which, on the surface, erase the black pigment. In order to obtain the expected effect (the whitened complexion) in a more timely manner, the practitioners mix these basic products with other substances with a high lightening content for the most part and less strong for others. It depends on the timeframe targeted by the actor. One of the recipes is described below by a dermatologist we met during our field investigations:

*"There are those who, waiting for immediate results, end up crushing sherds of bottles, the powder of which is mixed with bleach, cement or often with care ointment. This process quickly remove the epidermis and the dermis".*

This particularly important fact, which of radically changing the color of his skin, authorizes us to summon here the sociology of the body. Considered as a recent branch of sociology, the sociology of the body has for its object the study of the representations and social uses of the human body [21]. The theory is based on the idea of the body as an object of meaning, that is to say, a manipulable object, which can be shaped or modified at will [22, 23], to convey a message. The individual thus uses it as a symbol of its social or cultural allegiance, etc. Hence the thesis that it is quite possible that the social practices and conceptions related to the body, show other things that they do not allow to see in the first place. It is among other deductions, which Mauss [24] pointed out by asserting that "Men, society by society, in a traditional way, know how to use their bodies". If, therefore, we are to confine ourselves to the sociology of the body, it will be necessary to look behind the tendency to radically clear the skin, a meaning other than the mere fact of having white skin. This may be the need to assert one's belonging to a social group, a signal of a profound change in society, a response to complex social relations, the expression of a challenge to the norms and values promoted by the tradition, etc.

#### **Overall durations of application times**

To see their skin change color, practitioners play over the duration of application of the products. Some (more) spend several hours on product application, while others take less time. Overall durations range from less than thirty minutes, for the lowest, to more than three hours for the longest.

For users who take longer to apply lightening agents, the duration of the application time is considered a criterion involved in the success of this activity. Mauricette, says in this regard:

*"I rub softly my body, until I remove the oil that is it! My knees, my fingers, my feet, my elbows in on word my entire body, I can do three hours of time rubbing my body before sleeping!"*

Similarly, another practitioner says to give herself time when applying her product to the body. This corresponds to a well-organized agenda and each part of the body has its duration of application.

*"Not all parts of the body are rubbed in the same way eh! Because you are not going to rub your back or your elbows like your face! Otherwise it will turn red quickly! In any case I put at least 15 to 30 minutes like that to rub parts that are not difficult, such as the face especially, the body (the trunk) that is hidden it does not last to take. But what is most complicated are the feet, the back, the elbows, the knees, the hands. Those parts in any case I do not hurry; because when you say that your "Tcha-tcho" depigmentation has succeeded, it is these parts we look at first. I can put at least 2 hours since it's at night I do that. I make this my program, here I have to put 15 or 30 minutes for my face and my body and for the other parts I have more time for the product to work well."*

However, this practice of extended durations, if it remains widespread, is not shared by all. Josiane here gives a contrary opinion, based on temporal constraints, which prevent her to devote more time to this activity.

*«No!!! I do not have that time oh; if you use the range of the product as recommended you do not have to last in rubbing your body! I suppose if you use the product range correctly as in the leaflet, gently your complexion will shine as expected, and that's how I do; I take just 30 minutes or sometimes even less. I go to school, often I am late and when I also come back the tiredness is there so I do not waste time to pomade myself."*

The total lengths of application of lightening products therefore vary from one individual to another. Even if the trend is at an average duration that can be estimated at 2 hours of time. Leaving the product penetrating deep into the epidermis is the argument advanced. As well as requiring more time by certain parts of the body resistant to the lightening effect of the product, as already mentioned in a section above.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The results of this research highlight two dimensions of time applied to the body and the handling of lightening products, which should be examined point

by point. On the one hand, it is depigmentation practices as evidence of change or time as change. On the other hand, it is a question of depigmentation practices as rites relating representations of the body with representations of time - or time as signifier of the state of the body.

Time as a change is inherent in depigmentation, since this practice aims to change the color of the skin. The expected result, as we have seen, is to transform the color of the skin from a black to a light hue. Emeriau [25], describes this reference to the change in the use of depigmentation, summarizing the action to clarify with the expression "to make new skin. She mentions this:

*"In this logic, this act means to make" new skin ", to remove the old skin bearing the stigmas linked to the" black "skin, to get rid of a bulky skin to give place to a new skin, unloaded of its symbolic weight and which would reveal the "natural" beauty of the individual " .*

N'Diaye [26], still cited by Emeriau [25], evokes the notion of change in depigmentation practices, but in terms of the change of status in the group of belonging. This "colorism" phenomenon is marked by a "social valorisation" of the clear color of the skin, encouraged in particular by the media. Another research, evokes change by focusing on the current era marked by the progression of voluntary depigmentation. This would concern two women out of three in Bobo-Dioulasso in 2016, contrary to the situation which prevailed about fifteen years ago [27].

The other aspect of time as a change highlighted by this research is the fact that depigmentation presents itself in our study site as a set of unstable choices, practitioners often dropping their old products for new. Understanding this attractiveness of users for new products could be limited to the link between objects and expressed needs. But Baudrillard [28] discourages such an analysis. He bases his sociological theory of objects not on the object-satisfaction relation of needs, but rather on the link between social benefit and meaning. Similarly, Akrich [29] opposes the desire to be satisfied with a definition of action that focuses only on the technical dimensions of objects.

In terms of time as a signifier of the state of the body, this temporal dimension of the depigmentation practices is highlighted by the allusion to the seasons as well as to the periods of the day (morning / evening) and to the adaptation of bodily applications to the climate it does. It is also evident in the variability of the time of application from one organ to another. The user of depigmentation makes adjustments to his techniques depending on whether the climate is hot or cold, as well as a differential

distribution of the time devoted to the application of the lightening products, depending on whether the organ is imagined fragile or no. This result of our research corresponds to the expression of Mauss's "techniques of the body" [24]. Mauss considers the body as "the first object and the first technical means of Man". The notion of tradition is crucial in Mauss's conception of body techniques. It refers to the idea that techniques are transmitted. We shall be interested in the difference that Mauss establishes between the traditional act of technology and the traditional act of any other order. That is to say, that the technical act "is felt by the author as an act of a mechanical, physical or physicochemical order, and is pursued for that purpose." This is indeed the case in the user of depigmentation. Fragmentation of the application times of the lightening products according to the parts of the body; or varied application of doses of lightening products, is a mechanical act (the hand is brushed with the ointment and then passed over the body), a physical act (the effort of application is physical) and a psycho-chemical act (the ointment has a chemical effect which is supposed to act in a certain way in the understanding of the applicator). And it is for this purpose of the rapid or moderate lightening effect that the durations are assigned to the applications and parts of the body in the field of depigmentation. These techniques or body movements mentioned by Mauss made Julien *et al.*, [30] say that "the body moves". But these researchers put much more emphasis on the psycho-affective dimension of the body in motion. The thesis which they defend is summed up in the following assertion. : "To write the body is to write and describe the sensori-affectivo-motor behaviors observable in human activity".

Another conception of time in relation to voluntary depigmentation is mentioned in work carried out elsewhere, in particular in Congo Brazzaville. It is time as a cultural object. M'bemba-N'douba [8], describing the enlightening processes at work in the Congolese population, evokes various mixtures of handicrafts used to depigment themselves during the great customary festivals, religious ceremonies or marriages. These opportunities are described as privileged moments to obtain an excellent result in terms of skin-lightening. The practitioners proceed by different techniques in order to quickly make act the lightening product named "zazou". It is applied three or four days before the ceremony. The actor is brushed with the product and will have to stay at home during the whole operation for fear of being burned by the rays of the sun. Didillon *et al.*, [5], again on the subject of Congo Brazzaville, mention this same fact. Except that here, the brushing of traditional products is done over a long period before the ceremony. They analyze it from the point of view of the practitioners' resumption of the "symbolism of initiation (death and rebirth)". This is reflected in the practice of keeping a layer of product on the body for a relatively long period of time and

isolating the person concerned in a house during this period. The authors describe this practice in these terms: "... prolonged maintenance of a layer of product throughout the body and confinement ". The seclusion lasts several weeks and the result is extraordinary, since the authors speak of a "clear complexion comparable to that of the newborn". These ancient social and cultural practices of Congolese peoples are not mentioned by the results of our research. However, the seclusion in question seems to have a relationship among our respondents with a preference for cool seasons compared to the warm seasons. Seclusion allows the avoidance of the sun's rays and favors an in-depth action of the products; Fresh times fulfill this same function in our respondents who intensify their depigmentation activity during these periods. Moreover, the results of our research tend to show that many practitioners cannot support the seclusion as it is lived in the Congo. In the long waiting period required by seclusion, we oppose in our context the search for rapid methods using unconventional products.

## CONCLUSION

Time is a social category relevant to the analysis of the facts related to the body and the practices of depigmentation of which it is the object. It is a part of the practitioners' physical environment (climate, seasons, temperature, times of the day). But it is also highlighted in the techniques of the body developed by the users, in which it appears as an element of appreciation of: (i) the effort or "work" performed by the user as regards the durations (ii) representations of the body and their connection with representations of the possible toxicity of lightening products, which reveals an unequal distribution of the durations of application of the products between the organs of the body. The methods and techniques of application of lightening products highlight a set of representations of the body as multi organic and of depigmentation as having to take account of this specificity, thus giving rise to various applications, rhythmic by temporality. Time is also revealed as an analyzer of the behavior of users as consumers in action in the market of lightening products. Hence a focus on the notion of change close to that of fashion.

Among the problems raised by this research, one appears particularly interesting for subsequent studies. This is the quest for quick effects by practitioners. The body is then subjected to high chemical pressures due to the use of unconventional products. Understanding the logics of these social actors and carrying out an ethnography of the processes they use, in a multi-country context, could be rich of lessons.

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