

Intraracial Discrimination:
Do Hair Texture and Skin Tone Really Matter?

by

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ABSTRACT

Colorism is the intra-racial system of inequality based on skin color, hair texture, and facial features. In the African American culture, colorism has deeply rooted origins that continue to affect the lives of African Americans today. This study examined how colorism effects perceptions of personal characteristics, personal attributes, work ability, and hiring decisions of African American women 18 and older.

Participants for this study consisted of 188 African American women who self-identified as African American/Black and who were over 18 years of age living in the United States. All participants completed a demographic sheet and three instruments: Occupational Work Ethic Inventory (OWEI; Petty, 1995), Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974) and Personal Efficacy Beliefs Scale (PEBS; Riggs et al., 1994). They were randomly assigned to one of six vignettes describing a young African American/Black woman applying for a job. She was described as having one of three skin-tones (light, brown, or dark) and having kinky or straight hair.

A multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) failed to reveal differences in personal characteristics, personal attributes, and work ability due to skin tone or to hair texture. Multiple linear regression analyses revealed that hair texture predicted hiring decision, after controlling for relevant demographic variables. Participant education and vignette hair texture influenced hiring decisions, accounting for 8.2% of the variance. The woman in the vignette with straight hair was more likely to be recommended for hire and more educated participants were more likely to recommend hiring. These findings suggest that education may be an important factor in changing the influence of colorism

in African American culture and that hair texture may be a factor of colorism that influences hiring of applicants.

To all Black girls,
may you never forget your worth.

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Chapter 1

The Problem in Perspective

Intra-racial discrimination within the African American culture has a substantial negative impact on the African American community (Wilder & Cain, 2010). Although there are frequent protests by African Americans against discrimination from other racial/ethnic groups and initiatives for equal treatment both in society and in the workplace, the issue of discrimination is primarily regarded as intergroup racial bias, wherein, intragroup discrimination (i.e. discrimination within a culture or group), particularly colorism bias, has typically been ignored.

According to Hill (2002) the beginnings of colorism originated during slavery making colorism deeply rooted in the African American community. The diverse range of skin tones among African Americans is largely due to inter-racial unions and the slave trade (Pearson-Trammell, 2010). The hierarchy related to appearance created during slavery is similar to the one that still exists today in African American culture: Individuals with features more commonly found among Whites, such as lighter skin and straighter hair, are more highly valued (Robinson, 2011) than are individuals with darker skin and kinky hair. Not only does colorism affect the daily functioning and social interactions of African Americans, colorism has been identified as potentially self-destructive to the relationship between African Americans and the society in which they live (Hill, 2002).

Colorism: Skin Tone and Hair Texture

Colorism is defined as an intra-racial system of inequality based on skin color, hair texture, and facial features that place systematic privileges and value on phenotypic features that are closer to those of Whites (Robinson, 2011; Wilder & Cain, 2010). Those features include the aforementioned lighter skin and straighter hair. Unlike racism that functions across ethnic categories, colorism functions within ethnic categories (Robinson, 2011).

Recently, colorism has been a popular topic in the media, ranging from Oprah Winfrey's *Life Class* (Winfrey & Terry, 2014) to Chris Rock's *Good Hair* (Stilson et al, 2009) to Bill Duke's *Dark Girls* (Berry & Duke, 2011) and *Light Girls* (Duke, 2015). All chronicled the reality of color bias on the experiences of African American women. Another recent example was the casting call for African American women for a future *Niggaz Wit Attitudes* (NWA) movie. According to the Associated Press (2014), that casting call resulted in considerable backlash. The casting call stated that A-list girls could be of any race but "must have real hair." B-list girls "should be light skinned." C-list girls were labeled "African American girls medium to light-skin with a weave." D-list girls were labeled as "poor, not in good shape, medium to dark-skin tone." As illustrated, American society is saturated with messages, particularly for African American women, about acceptable physical appearance.

Studying 58 African American women who participated in nine focus groups, Wilder (2010) suggested that colorism is a three-tiered structure due to an emerging skin-tone category of "brown" as a dominant skin tone. According to Wilder, the experiences of those labeled brown are quite different from those on the very light or very dark ends of the skin tone spectrum. Wilder found that the skin-tone "brown" is possibly a protected skin-tone and has mostly positive attributions. Specifically, those with skin tone in the middle of the color spectrum are not as affected by the consequences of colorism and seem to experience less discrimination and less negative targeting based on skin-tone. Further research is needed on this emerging classification to understand the qualities and experiences associated with being "brown."

Impact of Colorism

Skin tone. The impact that skin tone has on life experiences and perceived attractiveness is different for African American males and females. According to research by Hill (2002), men with darker skin are generally rated more positively by themselves as well as by others, while women with darker skin are generally rated more negatively by themselves and by others. Additionally, when comparing attractiveness scores for males and females, Hill found that color bias was weaker when applied to males. Specifically, attractiveness scores assigned to women reflected a strong preference for lighter skin; however, the same relationship was substantially weaker for men.

For African American women, colorism also affects their environment (Pearson-Trammell, 2010). This is especially true for African American females with darker skin who may be suffering from social disadvantages. For example, colorism has been found to impact selection of a companion, economic stability, education opportunities, and self-esteem of African American women (Pearson-Trammell, 2010).

In a qualitative study of ten self-identified African American women, Pearson-Trammell (2010) examined the relationship between colorism and self-esteem. Pearson-Trammell found a core theme of confusion among dark-skinned African American women who reported being discriminated against, unacknowledged, or rejected by other African Americans. In an earlier quantitative study of 2,107 self-identified Black Americans, based on the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA), Thompson and Keith (2001) found that skin color was an important predictor of self-esteem but not of self-efficacy among African American women. These women did not devalue their abilities based on skin color, but they did internalize some of the negative labels on certain principles of their self-worth based on skin-color including attractiveness, satisfaction, quality of life, and achievement.

Hair texture. Besides skin tone, hair texture is another major reason for African American women to be devalued by other African Americans. The concept of “good” and “bad” hair reflects the internalization of Eurocentric standards of beauty on Black identity (Robinson, 2011); specifically, there is hair length and texture discrimination within the African American culture (Robinson, 2011). “Good hair” is longer and considered more feminine or beautiful than is shorter hair. “Bad hair” is much shorter and kinky and is considered more masculine and less attractive than is longer hair. Kinky hair texture is more likely to be shorter, because it tends to be drier, which results in more breakage that decreases length. Hair textures that are wavy or straight tend to have higher value than the tightly coiled kinky textures common in African Americans. Kinky textures are typically viewed as “bad” hair and are the most devalued texture. In a qualitative study of 38 self-identified African American women, Robinson (2011) found having kinky hair can make the difference between being perceived as attractive or unattractive and being accepted or unaccepted. Robinson also found that the hair hierarchy also includes maintenance, how difficult and/or time-consuming hair is to style. Further research is needed to explore not only skin tone but also the impact of hair texture on perceptions of African American women’s abilities and attributes.

Colorism and the Workplace

Colorism also adversely affects economic security, by means of affecting finances needed for a home, clothing, household items, medical care, food, and recreational activities (Richman & Mandara, 2013). The likelihood of African American women becoming household breadwinners is well documented. For example, findings from the Pew (2013) research study revealed that African American women who were married were more likely to be the primary source of family income. Furthermore, African American women are disproportionately more

likely to be single mothers, comprising 40% of single mothers as compared to 12% of all mothers (Wang, Parker, & Taylor, 2013). As African American women have a higher likelihood of being the head-of-households, it could be suggested that discrimination reflected by colorism places undue burden on the welfare of African American families.

Recent studies suggest that African American women may experience disadvantages in the work place based on race. The idea that attractive people are assumed to be “better” (Wade, Romano, & Blue, 2004, p. 2552) makes it plausible that African American women judged as unattractive would be at a disadvantage in the workplace. In a study of 107 White college students, Wade and colleagues (2004) found that fair-skinned African Americans received better treatment in employment contexts. The magnitude of the difference in socioeconomic outcomes between light skinned and dark skinned African Americans in the United States is analogous to the difference in socioeconomic outcomes between African Americans and Whites (Marira & Mitra, 2013). For example, African Americans with lighter skin are likely to have higher salaries than African Americans with darker skin, averaging a difference of 28 cents per dollar earned (Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Thompson & Keith, 2001). In a study of 240 undergraduate college students, Harrison and Thomas (2009) found that Whites preferred to hire a lighter skinned African American with a bachelor’s degree and limited experience over a darker skinned African American with an MBA and managerial experience. These results indicated that perhaps colorism beliefs are fully accepted (Harrison & Thomas, 2009).

Based on the Hall et al. (2011) study of 41 African American women, it is evident that colorism is related to the income and benefits that African American women receive when employed. This qualitative study consisted of 6 focus groups in 3 different cities on the East Coast of the United States. The focus groups consisted of structured interviews designed to

examine the participants' daily lives. Specifically, the discrimination African American women experience comes in the form of stereotypes, excessive demands, exclusion, harassment, and assumptions of incompetence (Hall et al., 2011). Hall et al. found basic themes associated with workplace stressors for African American women including "being hired or promoted," "developing relationships," "dealing with racism and discrimination," feeling "isolated and/or excluded," and "code switching to overcome barriers" (p. 213). In the Hall et al. study, none of the participants believed that education or training guaranteed career progression. These findings demonstrate the critical impact that stereotypes and discrimination have on employment opportunities for African American women.

Theoretical Framework for Proposed Study

A theory of colorism does not exist at this time in the literature. Several studies (Hall, Everett & Hamilton-Mason, 2011; Pearson-Trammell, 2010; Thomas, Hacker & Hoxha, 2011; Wilder & Cain, 2010) examining colorism have utilized Grounded Theory to describe the impact of colorism practices on African Americans due to qualitative implications. The theories used to frame the research questions and make sense of the data in the present study are Attribution Theory and Social Identity Theory. These two theories have elements that together encompass parts of colorism including stereotyping and social comparison. The present study is primarily grounded in Attribution theory (Weiner, 1985), which attempts to explain ways people judge others differently (Robbins & Judge, 2014). Within attribution theory there are several methods or terms that describe how people make judgments. One of these terms is stereotyping, which is defined as "judging someone on the basis of our perception of the group which he or she belongs" (Robbins & Judge, 2014, p. 152). Stereotypes within African American culture including "good" and "bad" hair and personal characteristics assigned to individuals, particularly

women, based on skin tone and hair type are perhaps a manifestation of attribution theory constructs. Attribution Theory is limited in that the theory was developed to explain ways people judge others depending on the meaning assigned to the behavior (Robbins & Judge, 2014). In addition, Attribution Theory was developed based on experiments including White Americans and Western European participants (Robbins & Judge, 2014).

The present study is also grounded in Social Identity Theory, which theorizes explanations for social comparisons. Social comparison refers to the process of comparing in-groups more favorably than out-groups (McLeod, 2008). Privileges, however, may be granted to the in-group by both in-group and out-group members (Ryabov, 2013). In the current study, only in-group members are examined for their willingness to grant privileges (positive recognition) to other in-group members. Specifically, this study is examining African American women's perceptions of another African American woman. There are limitations to Social Identity Theory in this study. Social Identity Theory attempts to explain social comparisons across large groups, whereas the present study examines judgment within African American women based on smaller in-groups, skin tone and hair texture.

Purpose of This Study and Hypotheses

Colorism is a detrimental, discriminatory phenomenon in African American culture that has been documented in the literature (Hill, 2002; Pearson-Trammell, 2010; Robinson, 2011; Thompson & Keith, 2001; Wilder & Cain, 2010) and recently addressed in the popular media (Berry & Duke, 2011; Duke, 2015; Stilson et al, 2009; Winfrey & Terry, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative that mental health providers recognize and understand the significance of intra-racial discrimination in order to be able to facilitate change not only in colorism biases African

American women hold about other African American women but also in the self-perceptions of African American women.

Although colorism is prevalent in Black media (television, magazines, etc.), the majority culture, and daily life, there is limited research examining colorism and hiring practices among African Americans (for an exception see Wade, Romano & Blue, 2004; Harrison & Thomas, 2009; Marira & Mitra, 2013). As Hall et al. (2011) stated, “the major problem in the literature is that studies typically compare racially and ethnically diverse populations to White populations, suggesting that White populations are the “norm” or the “standard”” (p.18). Therefore, this study will examine the extent to which colorism based on skin tone and hair texture exists among African American women. Specifically, this study will examine colorism as related to perceptions of personal characteristics, personal attributes, and work ability among African American women.

Given the previous research (Hall et al., 2011; Marira & Mitra, 2013; Wade et al., 2004) on colorism and hiring practices, it is expected that skin color and hair texture biases will affect African American women’s perceptions of personal characteristics, personal abilities, work ability and hiring recommendations of African American women. Three hypotheses are proposed:

H1: African American women with light or brown skin-tone will be perceived as having more positive personal characteristics, personal attributes, and work ability than African American women with dark skin-tone.

H2: African American women with straight hair textures will be perceived as having more positive personal characteristics, personal attributes, and work ability than African American women with kinky hair.

H3: African American women with dark skin-tone and kinky hair will be recommended for hire less often than African American women with all other skin tones and hair textures.

Chapter 2

Method

Participants

Participants in the study included 188 women recruited from across the United States (U.S.), all of whom self-identified as African American/Black. Of the 188 participants, 21 (11.2%) identified as biracial with Black as their primary identity. Of these 21, one (.5%) participant identified as African American/Black and Asian, three (1.6%) identified as African American/Black and Caucasian, eight (4.3%) identified as African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino, four (2.1%) identified as African American/Black and Native American, and five (2.7%) identified as African American/Black and Other. The majority of the women came from the Eastern US ($n = 121$; 77%). Specifically, of the 157 who reported location 48 (30.6%) participants were from the Northeast, 23 (14.6%) were from the East coast, 50 (31.8%) from the South, 12 (7.6%) from the Midwest, 4 (2.5%) were from the Northwest, 11 (7.0%) from the Southwest, and 9 (5.7%) from the West.

All participants were between the ages of 18 and 69. Of the 155 participants who reported age, the mean age was 37.86 ($SD = 13.74$). Educational level ranged from having completed high school ($n = 10$, 6.4%) to a professional/doctoral degree with most participants having earned Bachelor's degree ($n = 50$; 31.8%) or a Master's degree ($n = 45$; 28.7%) or a professional/doctoral degree ($n = 33$; 17.6%). Nineteen (12.1%) reported having completed some college or technical school. For the 152 participants who reported income, income ranged from less than \$10,000 reported by 18 (11.8%) women to over \$100,000 reported by 16 (10.5%) women. The median income was between \$50,000 and \$60,000 dollars ($n = 22$; 14.5%). Of the 158 who reported a marital status, the vast majority were single ($n = 78$; 49.4%) or married ($n =$

54; 34.3%). Eleven (7%) indicated they were divorced, seven (4.4%) reported being separated, and two (1.3%) indicated they were widowed. Six (3.8%) reported another relationship status.

Of the 157 participants who reported their own skin-tone, 47 (29.9%) participants identified as light-skin, 86 (54.8%) identified as brown skin, 24 (15.3%) identified as dark-skin.

Design

This experimental study employed a 3 (skin tone) by 2 (hair texture) completely randomized factorial design. Skin tone had three levels: light skin, brown skin, and dark skin. Hair texture had two levels: kinky and straight. Participants were randomly assigned to one of six vignettes that depicted an African American woman with either straight or kinky hair (hair texture) and who was described as having dark skin, brown skin, or light skin (skin tone).

Vignettes

Each vignette described an African American woman, including her hair texture and skin tone, who was applying for a job in Human Resources. The six vignettes presented different combinations of hair texture and skin tone. A sample vignette is as follows:

Ayanna is a 24-year-old brown skin [dark skin; light skin] African American woman seeking an entry-level position in the Human Resources Department where you work. She is a recent college graduate with a major in Psychology. She maintained a “B” average and completed a summer internship with Parks and Recreation between her junior and senior years. Ayanna appears to be of average height and weight, is wearing a business suit, and has her hair styled in an Afro [has shoulder-length, straight hair].

Procedure

Participants were recruited primarily through the Internet by email, listservs, and flyers. A description of the study and a request for interested participants was posted on public bulletin

boards and public Internet bulletin boards. Interested participants were asked to complete an online survey packet. The materials instructed participants to read the vignette about a candidate for hire. The participant was then asked to rate the candidate's personal characteristics, personal abilities and work ability and then make a hiring decision based on the vignette. Demographic information about the participant was also gathered.

Measurement of Study Constructs

After reading an informed consent letter (see Appendix A), participants completed a demographic sheet and three instruments that assessed the study constructs: personal characteristics, personal attributes, and work ability. They also responded to a question, answered yes or no, about whether they would hire this woman.

Personal characteristics. This construct was measured by the 15-item Occupational Work Ethic Inventory- Revised (OWEI; Petty, 1995; Wang, 2009). The scale assesses the participant's perceptions of the vignette applicant's personal characteristics. This scale measures positive and negative personality characteristics (e.g. dependable, stubborn, hard-working, careless) using a seven-point Likert-type scale for rating each item. For this study, instead of being asked to self-evaluate, participants were asked to evaluate the applicant in the vignette. For example "I describe the applicant as..." Participants will indicate their perceptions of the vignette applicant's personal characteristics. The rating scale was: 1= never, 2 = almost never, 3 = seldom, 4 = sometimes, 5 = usually, 6 = almost always, and 7 = always. After reverse coding negative characteristics, ratings were summed with higher total scores, which could range from 50 to 350, reflecting more positive perceptions. The OWEI Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .96$ with a scale mean of 86.28 ($SD = 13.78$).

Personal attributes. The 24-item Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974) assessed participants' perception of the applicant's personal attributes. The PAQ is a paired characteristic scale that assesses perceptions of characteristics on a 1 to 5 point, scale where 1= not at all, 2= slightly, 3= somewhat, 4= moderately, and 5= very much. The PAQ includes items such as "not at all aggressive" to "very aggressive" and "can make decisions easily" to "has difficulty making decisions." For this study the items were changed from self-evaluation to evaluation of the vignette applicant. For example, directions read "for each question, you are to rate the applicant on that characteristic." After being reverse coded for negative attributes, responses were summed with total scores ranging from 24-120. Higher scores indicate more positive attributes. The Cronbach's alpha for PAQ was $\alpha = .73$ with a scale mean of 81.41 ($SD = 8.39$).

Work ability. The 10-item Personal Efficacy Beliefs Scale (PEBS; Riggs et al., 1994) was used to measure perceived work ability. The PEBS has been used to measure self-efficacy and outcome expectancy for job related constructs (Riggs et al., 1994). The PEBS includes items such as "I doubt my ability to do my job" and "I have all the skills needed to perform my job very well." For this study, wording of the items was changed from self-evaluation to evaluation of the applicant. For example "I doubt the applicant's ability to do the job" and "the applicant has all the skills needed to perform the job very well." The PEBS measures perception of ability on a 6-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." After recoding responses to negative items, responses were summed across the 10 items, with total scores ranging from 10 to 60. Higher total scores reflect more positive perceived work ability. The Cronbach's alpha for PEBS was $\alpha = .74$ with a scale mean of 45.38 ($SD = 6.72$).

Data Analysis Plan

Each hypothesis was analyzed with a 3 (skin tone) by 2 (hair texture) Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with the outcome variables personal characteristics, personal attributes, and work ability. H1 was analyzed for a skin tone main effect. H2 was analyzed for a hair texture main effect. H3 was analyzed with a hierarchical multiple regression that allowed for participant education, income and skin tone to be entered first and then hair texture by skin tone added as a two step to predict hiring decision.

Chapter 3

Results

Prior to analyzing the hypothesis the internal consistencies for the 3 outcome measures were calculated. The scales were tested to determine if equal variances could be assumed. In this study, that assumption is met as OWEI ($p = .547$), PAQ ($p = .342$), and PEBS ($p = .965$) which are all greater than $\alpha = .05$. The correlations among these three measures were: OWEI with PAQ ($r = .41, p = .000$); OWEI with PEBS ($r = .36, p = .000$); and PAQ with PEBS ($r = .23, p = .005$).

Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis one (H1), which predicted that African American women with light or brown skin tone would be perceived as having more positive personal characteristics, personal attributes, and work ability than African American women with dark skin-tone. The multivariate main effect for skin-tone was non-significant, $F = .67, p = .67$; therefore, hypothesis was not supported by the data.

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis two (H2), which predicted that African American women with straight hair textures will be perceived as having more positive personal characteristics, personal attributes, and work ability than African American women with kinky hair. The multivariate main effect for hair texture was also non-significant, $F = .25, p = .86$; therefore, hypothesis was not supported by the data.

These two hypotheses were tested by a 3 (skin tone) by 2 (hair texture) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) entering the three outcome variables together as they were significantly correlated. No further analyses were conducted for Hypothesis one and two. No differences due to skin tone or hair texture were found for personal characteristics, personal attributes, and work ability for participants in this study. Cell means and standard deviations across skin tone and hair texture are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Vig_skin	Vig_hair	M	SD	N
Total	kinky	45.45	6.86	79
	straight	45.30	6.91	73
	total	45.38	6.86	152

Hypothesis 3. To test hypothesis three, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine if hiring decision could be predicted from skin tone and hair texture, after controlling for relevant participant demographic variables. When income, education, and participant's reported personal skin tone were entered first to control for their possible influence on hiring decisions, they accounted for 8.2 percent of the variance in hiring decisions, $\Delta F(3, 148) = 4.40, p = .005$. Examination of the beta weights revealed that participants' education predicted hiring decisions $\beta = .224, t = 2.45, p = .016$. When skin tone and hair texture were entered together in step two, they enhanced the accounted for variance, $\Delta R^2 = .122, \Delta F(5, 146) = 3.68, p = .004$. Examination of the beta weights revealed that participants' the hair texture, $\beta = .161, t = 2.05, p = .042$, of the woman in the vignette as well as the educational level of the participant predicted hiring decisions, $\beta = .245, t = 2.68, p = .014$. The African American woman in the vignettes with straight hair was more likely to be recommended for hire ($r = .13, p = .048$) and more educated participants tended to make more positive hiring decisions ($r = .20, p = .006$).

Chapter 4

Discussion

This study examined the effects of colorism on hiring decisions and perceived personal characteristics and attributes. Existing literature has demonstrated the impact of colorism on self-esteem (Pearson-Trammell, 2010; Thompson & Keith 2001), perceptions (Harrison & Thomas, 2009; Hill, 2002; Wilder & Cain, 2010), skin-tone (Hill, 2002), hair texture (Robinson, 2011), and workplace (Hall et al., 2011; Marira & Mitra, 2013) bias within African American culture. The findings of the current study failed to find perceived differences in personal characteristics, personal attributes, and work ability due to the skin tone and hair texture of the African American woman in the vignettes, however, vignette hair texture and educational level of the participants were related to hiring recommendations. The woman described as having kinky hair was less likely to be recommended for hiring than the woman described as having straight hair. Furthermore, the more educated the participant, the more likely she was to recommend hiring the woman in the vignette regardless of skin tone and hair texture.

Although hair texture has received little empirical investigations, the Robinson (2011) study on hair suggests that there is a bias in the perceptions of women with kinky hair. This qualitative study had a sample of 38 Black females aged 19 to 81 to determine the values, definitions, and motives toward acquiring “good” (straight, easy to manage) hair (Robinson, 2011). This aspect of colorism is new in the literature. Robinson found that communication with others is how Black women learn the value of “good” hair, but their motivations to have “good” hair are rooted in maintenance rather than beauty. Robinson focused on time, maintenance, and personal attitudes toward hair texture, whereas this study attempted to demonstrate attitudes attributed to another because of that person’s hair texture. Perceptions of other women based on hair texture were not studied, nor were job related decisions such as

recommending for hire examined. However, the results of the Robinson study and the current investigation suggest that hair texture as an aspect of colorism needs further exploration.

A second aspect of colorism that was examined was skin tone. The majority of the participants in the present study identified as having “brown” (54.8%) or light (29.9%) skin. Very few (15.3%) self-identified as “dark” skin. This may be due to the negative stereotypes associated with dark skin as discussed by Pearson-Trammel (2010). Pearson-Trammel (2010) found that women with dark skin recognized themselves as different due to the hue of their skin and could recall experiences of being teased, harassed, verbally assaulted, or exorcised due to their skin tone. The testimonies of the 10 women in the Pearson-Trammel study may explain why so few women self-identified as dark skin or perhaps self-selected out of the study. Wilder (2010) suggested that women with the skin tone “brown” are possibly protected from skin tone bias and have more positive attributions assigned to them. The “cut points” of skin tone are highly subjective. Perhaps by identifying as brown or light skin, the participants were distancing themselves from the negative connotations of having dark skin. Actual skin tone was not assessed, however. Further research is needed to examine to what extent African American women’s own skin tones influence their perceptions of other African American women based on aspects of colorism.

To understand the findings of this study, it is important to understand the characteristics of the sample. The sample in this study tended to have higher levels of education, to have median yearly incomes between \$50,000 and \$60,000, and to self-identified as having the skin-tone “brown” or “light.” As noted above, this implies that there may have been a bias in self-identified skin-tone and in who chose to complete the study. Furthermore, no information was gathered to reveal what shade defines the differences in skin-tone. In addition, sample was

highly educated, with over three-fourths of the participants having earned Bachelor's degree or higher, whereas census data indicates that less than a third of African American women nationally have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). It is also plausible that more highly educated women are more sensitive to issues of colorism and responded to the vignettes so as to avoid demonstrating any bias, further research is needed to examine the effect of education on colorism biases. This may also imply that colorism biases are actually less prominent in highly educated women. Colorism among African American populations with less education still needs further insight.

Wade et al. (2004) and Harrison and Thomas (2009) both sampled white college students' perceptions of African Americans related to work. Their findings suggest that colorism biases are no longer limited to within group and have become a part of the U.S. culture at large regarding perceptions of African Americans. Given the realities of work and income for African American women, disproportionately represented as single mothers and most likely to be the breadwinners of their families (Wang, Parker, & Taylor, 2013), it is not surprising that African American women were very favorable about hiring other African American women. Also, perhaps the participants had faced a work situation similar to the one in the vignette and identified with the woman. The present study focused on entry-level work while the Hall et al. (2012) focused on stereotypes and career progression. Perhaps colorism discrimination does not affect African American women's ability to be hired into entry level positions as much as it influences the possibility for further advancement.

A recent article by Cooper (2015) argued that the difference in racial category terms, Black versus African American, can possibly lead to discrimination. Though the article is humorous and satirical the author makes compelling arguments and bases her arguments on a

recent study by Hall et al (2015). Hall et al. (2015) found that white people have a more negative view of persons labeled “Black” compared to those who are labeled “African-American.” Cooper (2015) states her beliefs and reasoning for choosing which term to use when. Cooper argues that “Black” is her preferred term when defining herself and “African American” is the box she was assigned to in school and on applications. The present study used “African American/Black” on the demographic questions and “African American” in the vignette to describe the applicant. Based on this new research the choice of term may have impacted how the participants perceived the applicant’s personal characteristics, attributes, and work ability. Further research is needed to examine the attitudes and beliefs based on terminology.

The recent increase in media coverage of colorism may have also affected the perceptions participants held. There has been substantial coverage of colorism on recent television shows (Duke, 2015; Winfrey & Terry, 2014), in magazine and online articles (Cooper, 2015), and through commercials. This increased media attention may have had an impact on the participants’ sensitivity to colorism. Although the current findings vary from what is reported in the literature, perhaps the findings from this study reflect a positive change in the beliefs and attitudes held by African American women regarding aspects of colorism. Further research is needed to determine whether the current upswing in choice of natural hairstyles, media coverage on colorism, and beauty campaigns more inclusive of minority women are shifting the stereotypes about and discrimination based on colorism.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that need to be noted. First, there was not a procedural check in the survey to see if the participant understood the manipulation. Therefore,

it is unknown whether participants reacted to the assigned skin tone and hair texture. Perhaps the vignette examples were not powerful enough to reflect colorism. This may also have been a biased sample in that it was a highly educated sample that perhaps is more sensitive to colorism. The recent increase in media regarding African American/Black women may have sensitized the sample to the effects of colorism. Due to the demographics of this sample, the results cannot be generalized to all African American/Black women. The present study had inconsistent findings in that perceptions were all positive yet hair texture was relevant in hiring decision. Finally, all measures were taken online (paper-pencil) and no actual behaviors were assessed.

Future Research and Conclusions

There were no significant differences in the three perception variables due to skin tone and hair texture. The variance in hiring decision was observed mostly due to education of the participants and vignette hair texture. This may suggest that colorism beliefs differ based on socioeconomic status (SES), further research is needed to examine the impact of SES on colorism beliefs. In comparing the findings from this study with the results of other works, it appears that colorism may function differently across educational backgrounds. Further research should examine the effects of education on colorism. Historically, colorism has affected the lives of all African American women; further research should seek to examine the impact on colorism on women with dark skin tone and whether colorist attitudes influence women with dark skin perceptions of other African American women.

Colorism has been pervasive in African American society (Marira & Mitra, 2013; Wilder, 2010). Further research will improve the understanding of colorism mechanisms and the affect it has on African American women. Given the findings of the current study; it is evident that colorism needs to be explored further.

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APPENDIX A
CONSENT LETTER

Dear Participant,

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of work ability of African American women. This study is part of Morgan Howell's master's thesis at Arizona State University, under the supervision of Dr. Sharon Kurpius.

Participants:

All African American women ages 18 and older are invited to participate.

Procedure:

If you agree to be in this study you will be asked to do the following:

1. Read a short vignette.
2. Complete an online survey packet that will last approximately 30 minutes.

The total time required to complete the study should be approximately 30 minutes.

Benefits/Risks to Participant:

Participants may help contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of counseling. There are minimal to no risks associated with taking this online survey.

Voluntary Participation/Confidentiality

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to complete the study at any point during the experiment, or refuse to answer any of the questions with which you are uncomfortable. At any point you may withdraw participation in the study and not be penalized. Your name will never be connected to your responses in the survey. The data will be accessible only to those working on the project. Your answers are confidential and will be kept securely.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, you can reach me at Morgan.Howell@asu.edu, or the faculty supervisor, Dr. Sharon Kurpius at Sharon.Kurpis@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Statement of Consent:

By submitting the survey you acknowledge you have read the above information and agree to participate in this study.

APPENDIX B
DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

Instructions: Please provide a response for each of the following questions:

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
3. What is your marital status?
 - a. Single
 - b. Married
 - c. Separated
 - d. Divorced
 - e. Widowed
 - f. Other
4. What is your annual income?
 - a. less than \$10,000
 - b. \$10,001 to \$20,000
 - c. \$20,001 to \$30,000
 - d. \$30,001 to \$40,000
 - e. \$40,001 to \$50,000
 - f. \$50,001 to \$60,000
 - g. \$60,001 to \$70,000
 - h. \$70,001 to \$80,000
 - i. \$80,001 to \$90,000
 - j. \$90,001 to \$100,000
 - k. Greater than \$100,000
5. With what race or ethnic identity do you identify? [select all that apply]
 - a. African American/Black
 - b. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - c. Caucasian
 - d. Latino/Hispanic
 - e. Native American
 - f. Other
6. My skin-tone is:
 - a. Light skin
 - b. Brown skin
 - c. Dark skin
7. Highest level of education completed:
 - a. High school graduate
 - b. Some college
 - c. Bachelor's degree

- d. Master's degree
- e. Professional/Doctoral degree

8. Location:

- a. Northeast
- b. South
- c. Midwest
- d. Southwest
- e. Northwest
- f. West
- g. East

9. Major in college: _____

APPENDIX C

OCCUPATIONAL WORK ETHIC INVENTORY (OWEI) (Petty, 1995; Wang, 2009)

Directions:

For each work ethic descriptor listed below, select the answer that most accurately describes your standards of the applicant for that item. There are seven possible choices for each item:

Never	Almost Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always	Always
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I describe the applicant as:

1. Dependable
2. Independent
3. Ambitious
4. Reliable
5. Initiating
6. Honest
7. Careful
8. Emotionally stable
9. Patient
10. Punctual
11. Persistent
12. Devoted
13. Loyal
14. Resourceful
15. Modest

APPENDIX D

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES QUESTIONNAIRE EXTENDED VERSION (Spence, Helmreich
& Stapp, 1979)

Instructions:

The items below inquire about what kind of person you think the applicant is. Each item consists of a PAIR of characteristics, with the numbers 1-5 in between. For example,

Not at all artistic 1.....2.....3.....3.....5 Very artistic

Each pair describes contradictory characteristics - that is, the applicant cannot be both at the same time, such as very artistic and not at all artistic.

The letters form a scale between the two extremes. You are to choose a letter that describes where you think the APPLICANT falls on the scale. For example, if you think that the applicant has no artistic ability, you would choose A. If you think that the applicant is pretty good, you might choose D. If you are only medium, you might choose C, and so forth.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Not at all aggressive | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very aggressive |
| 2. Not at all independent | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very independent |
| 3. Not at all emotional | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very emotional |
| 4. Very submissive | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very dominant |
| 5. Not at all excitable in a crisis | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very excitable in a major major crisis |
| 6. Very passive | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very active |
| 7. Not at all able to devote others | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Able to devote self completely to completely to others |
| 8. Very rough | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very gentle |
| 9. Not at all helpful to others | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very helpful to others |
| 10. Not at all competitive | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very competitive |
| 11. Very home oriented | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very worldly |
| 12. Not at all kind | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very kind |
| 13. Indifferent to others' approval | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Highly needful of others' approval |
| 14. Feelings not easily hurt | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Feelings easily hurt |
| 15. Not at all aware of others | 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 | Very aware of feelings of feelings of others |

16. Can make decisions	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	Has difficulty making easily decisions
17. Gives up very easily	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	Never gives up easily
18. Never cries	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	Cries very easily
19. Not at all self-confident	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	Very self-confident
20. Feels very inferior	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	Feels very superior
21. Not at all understanding others	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	Very understanding of others
22. Very cold in relations with others	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	Very warm in relations with others
23. Very little need for security	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	Very strong need for security
24. Goes to pieces under pressure	1.....2.....3.....4.....5	Stands up well under pressure

APPENDIX E

PERSONAL EFFICACY BELIEFS SCALE (Riggs et al, 1994)

Think about the applicant's ability to do the tasks required by the job. When answering the following questions, answer in reference to the applicant's work skills and ability to perform the job.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

1. I have confidence in the applicant's ability to do the job.
2. There are some tasks required by my job that the applicant cannot do well.
3. When the applicant's performance is poor, it is due to lack of ability.
4. I doubt the applicant's ability to do the job.
5. The applicant has all the skills needed to perform the job very well.
6. Most people in this line of work can do this job better than the applicant can.
7. The applicant is an expert at this job.
8. The applicant's future in this job is limited because of lack of skills.
9. The applicant is very proud of her job skills and abilities.
10. The applicant feels threatened when others watch her work.

APPENDIX F
OWEI PERMISSION

COMPOSE

Inbox (2)

Starred

Important

Sent Mail

Drafts

[imap]/Drafts

[imap]/Sent

Follow up

...



Search people...

- Amber Cruz
- Maggie Wilder
- Ronald Endicott
- Tiffany Taylor
- Andrea Pinchac
- Ashley Lowe
- Brianca German
- Brittany Copeland
- Christopher Clark

OWEI Thesis

Inbox x



Morgan Howell <mshowel2@ncsu.edu>

Jan 26



to rbhill

Hello Dr. Hill,

I am a Masters student at Arizona State University currently working on my thesis about colorism and African American women hiring preferences. I am hoping for permission to use the OWEI at a part of my measures. After taking the inventory online I found your email. Please let me know if using the OWEI will be a possibility.

Thank you,
Morgan Howell



R Hill <rbhill@uga.edu>

Jan 26



to me

Hi Morgan –

If you use the online version I can provide permission and the answer is yes. If you want to administer this with pencil and paper, you will need to contact Dr. Gregory Petty at the University of Tennessee. He holds the copyright on the printed form of the OWEI.

Let me know if I can assist further.

- rh

R Hill

rbhill@uga.edu



Show details

VIGNETTE AVATARS



imadeFace

Dark skin/kinky hair



imadeFace

Dark skin/straight hair



imadeFace

Brown skin/kinky hair



imadeFace

Brown skin/straight hair



imadeFace

Light skin/kinky hair



imadeFace

Light skin/straight hair