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ARE BLACK PEOPLE TODAY AWARE OF COLORISM?
AN EXPLORATION OF COLORISM AND THE IMPACT IT HAS ON BLACK PEOPLE

DIAKA THIAM
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

David Hutson
Professor of Sociology
Thesis Supervisor

David Ruth
Professor of History
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

ABSTRACT

Colorism is understood as discrimination based on skin tone (Hunter 2007). It is a phenomenon that is not often discussed in today's society. Previous studies have focused on Eurocentric beauty standards (Hill 2002), as well as the impact of colorism on people with Light Skin and Dark Skin tones. However, the way Black people view their skin tone as either positive or negative has yet to be fully explored. To investigate how aware Black people are of colorism, I created a survey that measured body image satisfaction and self-esteem, skin tone satisfaction and personal history, media and cultural attitudes, and advantages and disadvantages. A total of 253 Black/African-American people between the ages of 18-31+ qualified to take the survey. I found that people with Light Skin tone had the most positive perception of their skin tone in the media when compared to people with Medium/Brown and Dark Skin tones. People with Light Skin tone have more positive feelings about their own physical attractiveness than people with Medium/ Brown and Dark Skin tones, and people with Dark Skin are more likely to want to change their skin tone. Based on these findings, colorism is a phenomenon that requires further research, as skin tone stratification remains an issue in Black/African-American communities.

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INTRODUCTION

The mistreatment of people based on their race, sex, age, religion, and sexual orientation is (and has been) prevalent in the U.S. for some time. Often, this mistreatment takes the form of discrimination, where people can be denied access to resources by others who have power. In terms of racial discrimination, there are two separate but intersecting systems at work: one based on race and one based on color (Hunter 2007). Specifically, *racial* discrimination involves the oppression of people based on their race/ethnicity, and although people of color are discriminated against because of their race, the level of discrimination often depends of their skin tone (Hunter 2007). This second system of discrimination, which is just as prominent and based on skin tone, is known as "colorism."

Colorism has been an issue since slavery and European colonialism; yet, it is still occurring today. Women and men of color around the world are experiencing the effects of colorism, although women of color may be more affected by colorism than men (Thompson and Keith 2001). Because of beauty standards that are Eurocentric, such as having blond straight hair, lighter eye color, a small nose, and fairer skin, women of color typically cannot live up to these physical ideals (Thompson & Keith 2001). Additionally, these standards are portrayed in the media, and put pressure on women who are darker to achieve the Eurocentric beauty standard. Such pressures are even more problematic in today's society with the multiple forms of media available—both traditional (i.e., movies and television) and newer social media outlets. In this media environment, colorism is still a social issue and topic of discussion. However, the literature and research, thus far, do not tell us how Black or African-American people today deal with colorism and the effects it has on their lives.

To further explore how colorism impacts Black people today, I conducted a survey using quantitative methods. A total of 253 Black adults between the ages of 18-31+ completed the survey. Findings suggest that Black people are aware of colorism and that media is an important factor in this

awareness. I found that people with Light Skin tone feel that there are more positive representations of their skin tone in the media, particularly when compared to Medium and Dark Skin tones. Findings also show that Light Skin people have more positive feelings about their own physical attractiveness than the other two groups and that Dark Skin people are more likely to want to change their skin tone. This study reveals many of the negative impacts colorism has on Black people today. It highlights the importance of analyzing skin tone stratification and its influence within communities of color.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Colorism is "the allocation of privilege and disadvantage according to the lightness or darkness of one's skin" (Burke, 2008). Globally, the idea of skin color bias/discrimination has been linked to European colonization, the Americas, and Latin America (Dixon & Telles 2017). During the time of colonialism, White Europeans used their power to enforce "white superiority" (Hunter 2007). Preferences for whiteness and light skin tone have been associated with European colonization, often reinforced by religious beliefs. Europeans used the Bible to associate dark-skinned Africans with the "curse of ham" (Dixon & Telles pg.497). And, those who were closer to whiteness gained more "social and economic privileges" (Dixon & Telles pg. 497). From the time of European colonialism, skin tone stratification became more prominent as a way to differentiate people of color.

Colorism has also been a problem in the Americas, as the idea of skin tone differences became important during slavery. Such divisions between different levels of darkness or lightness started when white slave owners would rape African women slaves. As a result of this, women would give birth to lighter skinned children. These lighter skinned slaves, known as "mulattos" at the time, were given preferential treatment by working as maids and housekeepers in the homes of the slave owners. As for darker skinned slaves, they usually worked outside on the plantation. Once slavery ended after 1865, freed lighter skinned slaves found that they had "upward mobility," meaning that they had a greater advantage in terms of wealth, education, and jobs (Dixon & Telles 2017). According to Hunter (2007), "both systems operated as forms of white domination that rewarded those who emulated whiteness culturally, ideologically, economically, and even aesthetically" (pg. 239). European colonialism and slavery in the Americas imposed a hierarchy of whiteness that had long-lasting effects.

As a direct result of both colonialism and slavery in the U.S., Black people face certain advantages and disadvantages based on skin tone. As Hunter (2007) explains, "in societies where resources are divided by race and color, light skinned people get disproportionate amount of the benefits" (pg. 244). Social scientists have shown that lighter skinned people receive social privileges, such as that

they are more likely to continue and complete their education, have a higher social status, and a higher socioeconomic status than people who are dark skinned (Hunter 2013). In terms of psychological disorders, light skinned African Americans also "struggle less often with depression" (Hunter 2013, pg. 249). Dark skinned Black people are disadvantaged in terms of opportunities, such as employment and education. For example, lighter skinned students are more likely to be encouraged by counselors to go to college than dark skinned students (Hunter 2007).

Though light skinned people do get certain benefits, they are "disadvantaged" when it concerns their identity and wanting to be part of their community. Hunter (2007) describes this phenomenon as people searching for "ethnic authenticity," which refers to one's identity and the "authenticity of it" (Hunter 2007, pg. 244). Light skinned and biracial people often "feel left out or pushed out of co-ethnic groups" (Hunter 2007, pg. 244). Based on this, light skinned people feel the need to validate themselves by claiming how proud they are to be Black. Hunter (2007) also notes that this ethnic or racial authenticity is seen as an advantage for darker skinned people, because they are seen as having have a "greater Black consciousness" (Hughes and Hertel 1990), or being aware of your Blackness. Dark Skin people do not need to prove their blackness, unlike their Light Skinned counterparts, as it is simply assumed due to their darker skin tone. As the research shows, there are advantages and disadvantages for both light skinned and dark skinned people. While dark skinned people face overt discrimination based on their skin tone in different institutions such as, "educational institutions, labor market, and marriage market" (Hunter 2007), lighter skinned people feel ostracized from their identity and community.

Moreover, colorism also influences beauty and how it is viewed amongst people of color. While such standards of appearance affect both men and women, Colorism often impacts women the most due to gendered expectations. Light skinned women have a higher social and beauty capital than darker skinned women (Hunter 2007), which can be exchanged for higher social status through marriage and economic benefits. Indeed, marrying a spouse of a higher social and socioeconomic status raises a light skinned woman's status accordingly (Hunter 2007). Meeting such Eurocentric beauty standards is difficult for all women of color, but especially for darker skinned women. The ways in which women of

color try to adhere to the Eurocentric beauty standards are through straightening kinky or curly hair, wearing light colored contacts, and/or skin bleaching (Hunter 2007). For skin bleaching, there are creams that dark skinned people use known as "skin lighteners, skin whiteners, skin-toning creams, skin evening creams, skin fading gels, etc" (Hunter 2007, pg. 248). These creams, if used regularly on the face or body, promise "to 'lighten,' 'brighten,' or 'whiten' the skin" (Hunter 2007, pg. 248). Such creams are marketed towards women to convince them that they are not beautiful unless they meet the Eurocentric beauty standards. Stemming from this idea of beauty and colorism, Hill (2002) found that Black women feel the need to "emulate whiteness" because they want to be viewed as feminine (Hill 2002). And, according to Hill (2002), femininity has been historically linked with whiteness. Therefore, Black women of all skin tones feel pressured to try and get close to having features associated with white women.

In addition to this, there are multiple areas in which colorism plays an important role in a person of color's life. According to Harvey et al. (2017), there are four specific areas: self-concept, impression formation, attraction/affiliation, and upward mobility. Self-concept focuses on how black Americans view themselves, especially in a society in which light skin is more preferred (Harvey et al. 2017). Impression formation states that the way people view Black Americans is dependent on the person's skin tone, and consider it an "impression of people of color" (Harvey et al. 2017, pg. 742). Attraction/affiliation states that lighter skinned people are more attractive than darker skinned people, and terms such as "attractive" and "unattractive" are associated with light skin and dark skin, respectively. As for upward mobility, it is often based on one's skin tone, and it can determine their social status and socioeconomic status (Harvey et al. 2017).

Furthermore, media--both traditional and social media--has exacerbated this pressure for Black women and men, as the lack of representation has been an issue. Dark skinned people are neither represented very often in the media or (when they are) they are represented poorly. From television shows to the big screen, there is a lack of representation for all people of color, but especially for those with medium or darker skin tones. Light skinned people are more likely to be represented positively than dark skinned people (Steele 2016). In addition to media and this pressure, colorism influences self-esteem, and

women's self-esteem has been found to be more affected by colorism than men (Thompson & Keith 2001). Thompson & Keith (2001) mention that body image is part of self, which is important because if people have a positive body image, it changes how they view themselves. Media, self-esteem, and body image are all significant in terms of understanding how colorism impacts Black people today. However, the question remains: are they aware of it in their lives? And, if so, how does it impact them in terms of their body image and social interactions.

     I hypothesized that Black today are aware of colorism in their own lives and that it does impact the way they view themselves, in terms of satisfaction with their skin tone. Further, I hypothesized that darker-skinned people will be more likely to have lower self-esteem, body image, skin tone satisfaction, and face more disadvantages in life.

METHOD

To collect data, I constructed a survey with both standardized questions and qualitative responses. Surveys are beneficial for receiving a wide range of responses, as well as documenting the breadth of a phenomenon. They can be administered in multiple ways (e.g. online, paper and pencil, telephone, and mail), although online surveys are easily accessible for those with an electronic device. Additionally, it can be anonymous, specifically, using an online survey. One limitation of using a survey with only standardized responses is that we cannot get the same depth of participant responses that might be obtainable in an interview. Therefore, I used standardized questions and allowed respondents to write in some answers to qualitative questions.

I used a crowdsourcing marketplace through Amazon.com called Mechanical Turk for the survey. When participants clicked on the survey, they had to complete the Pre-Screen Qualification section. In this section, I asked demographic questions, such as gender, age, ethnicity, income, and education. A participant would only qualify to take the survey if they identified as Black or African-American. If they did not qualify, they were exited from the survey and thanked for their time. Participants that qualified had to read the informed consent form before proceeding onto the survey. A total of 253 Black or African-American people qualified for and completed this survey. The survey is divided into four main sections: body image satisfaction and self-esteem, skin tone satisfaction and personal history, media and cultural attitudes, and advantages and disadvantages.

Body Image Satisfaction and Self-esteem

Questions for this category were taken from the Cash Body Image States Scale and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale. Cash Body Image States Scale measures how an individual feels about their body image at the current moment. It has six items on a 9-point scale, and participants were asked, "Right now, I feel…..with my physical appearance." Participants answered based on the scale, ranging from Extremely dissatisfied with my physical appearance to Extremely satisfied with my physical appearance.

To assess self-esteem, I used Rosenberg's Self Esteem scale. This is a 10-item scale that measures an individual's positive and negative evaluation of the self. Participants were asked, "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" and answered on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Skin Tone Satisfaction and Personal History

In this section, participants answered questions regarding skin tone satisfaction and personal history with skin tone. Participants had to indicate how they describe their skin tone to others, and answers they could choose from were Light-skinned, Medium/Brown-skinned, or Dark-skinned. Questions or statements regarding personal history assessed how participants felt about their skin tone growing up, including influence from family and friends (e.g., "While growing up, my parent(s) made me feel good about my skin tone"). Answers ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Media and Cultural Attitudes

Regarding media and social interactions, participants were asked about representations of their skin tone in the media and how people view their skin tone (e.g., "My skin tone is represented positively on television"). Answers ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Participants also answered an open-ended question about their feelings regarding representation of their skin tone in the media (e.g., "Thinking about the representation of your skin tone in the media, how do you feel about those representations").

Advantages and Disadvantages

To assess benefits and disadvantages, participants were asked about employment and education benefits regarding their skin tone (e.g., "My skin tone has benefited me when it came to job opportunities"). They were also asked about their preference in who they date (e.g., "I prefer dating someone whose skin tone is similar to mine"). Answers ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I conducted a series of one-way between subjects ANOVAs comparing light, medium, and dark skin tone groups on a host of outcome variables. A series of post-hoc tests were run to determine the strength of comparisons between skin tone groups. The variables of interest included measurements of media representation, physical attractiveness, satisfaction with skin tone, whether or not someone would change their skin tone (if possible), and if skin tone led to being treated differently in social life. Qualitative responses were also analyzed for similarities and differences between respondents using textual analysis techniques.

RESULTS

I conducted a series of one-way between subjects ANOVAs comparing light, medium, and dark skin tone groups on a host of outcome variables. Below, I list those outcomes of interest.

Media: I measured perceptions of skin tone and the media through seven questions that asked about positive representations and negative stereotypes on television, in movies, and on social media. Each question was formatted as a Likert Scale with seven options ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). I found a significant effect of skin tone on positive perceptions in the media, $F(2,231)=5.60$, $p=.004$. People with Light Skin Tone (M=4.32, SD=1.03) had the most positive perception of their skin tone in the media relative to those with Medium Skin Tone (M=3.64, SD=.99, $p=.006$) and those with Dark Skin Tone (M=3.90, SD=1.14, $p=.002$), the latter two groups of which did not differ ($p=.32$).

Physical Attractiveness: I measured how people felt about their physical attractiveness through a question using a 9-point Likert Scale that ranged from Extremely Physically Attractive (1) to Extremely Physically Unattractive (9). I found that skin tone did not have a significant effect on people feeling positively or negatively about their overall physical attractiveness, $F(2,234)=2.82$, $p=.062$. People with Light Skin Tone (M=3.76, SD=2.02) reported feeling more positively about their physical attractiveness relative to those with Medium Skin Tone (M=4.60, SD=2.19, $p=.019$). People with Dark Skin Tone (M=4.40, SD=2.38), however, did not differ in their feelings of physical attractiveness from people with Medium Skin Tone ($p=.586$), and the differences between People with Light Skin Tone and Dark Skin Tone regarding feelings of physical attractiveness were not significant ($p.=.139$).

Satisfied with Skin Tone: I measured how satisfied people were with their skin tone through a question using a 7-point Likert Scale that stated, "Overall, I am satisfied with my skin tone." Responses ranged

from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). I found that satisfaction with one's skin tone did not depend on one's skin tone being light, medium, or dark, $F_{(2,231)}=2.54$, p=.081. However, People with Medium Skin Tone (M=6.01, SD=1.33) were significantly more satisfied with their skin tone than People with Dark Skin (M=5.47, SD=1.58, p=.027), while there were no significant differences in satisfaction between People with Light Skin Tone (M=5.78, SD=1.57) and People with Medium Skin Tone (p=.326) or between People with Light Skin Tone and People with Dark Skin Tone (p=.281).

Would Change Skin Tone: I measured how people felt about potentially changing their skin tone through a question using a 7-point Likert Scale that stated, "If I could change my skin tone, I would." Responses ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). I found a significant effect of skin tone on whether or not people would change their skin tone, $F_{(2,232)}=11.89$, p=.000. People with Dark Skin Tone (M=4.16, SD=2.23, p=.000) were significantly more likely to want to change their skin tone when compared with People with Light Skin Tone (M=2.31, SD=1.87). People with Dark Skin Tone were also significantly more likely to want to change their skin tone when compared with People with Medium Skin Tone (M=2.75, SD=2.06, p=.000). Both People with Light Skin Tone and People with Medium Skin Tone showed no significant differences in wanting to change their skin tone when compared (p=.193).

Treated Differently in Life: I measured if people felt they had been treated differently throughout their life because of their skin tone using two 7-point Likert Scales asking about benefits in jobs and in education. Responses ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). I found that there was no significant effect of skin tone on people feeling that they were treated differently, $F_{(2,230)}=2.41$, p=.092. There was a moderately significant effect when comparing People with Light Skin Tone (M=4.65, SD=1.03, p=.069) as feeling treated differently when compared to People with Medium Skin Tone (M=4.08, SD=2.07). There were no significant differences between People with Medium Skin Tone and People with Dark Skin Tone (M=4.62, SD=1.65), and People with Light Skin Tone were just as likely to feel treated different as People with Dark Skin Tone, whether positively or negatively.

DISCUSSION

Media plays an important role in terms of how aware Black people are of colorism. Previous studies have mainly focused on the impact of Eurocentric beauty standards (Hill 2002), but do not discuss how the media reinforces those standards. This is important, given that positive and negative portrayals of Black people often depend on skin tone. From the survey results, Light skinned people feel that they have a positive representation in the media, more so than people who are Medium and Dark skinned. This finding makes sense, because when Black people are represented in the media, there are numerous stereotypes associated with their skin tone (Steele 2016). Positive stereotypes are more associated with Light Skin tone and negative stereotypes are more associated with Dark Skin tone. Based on the results, people who have Medium Skin tone do not feel that they are represented positively in the media when compared to Light skinned people.

There were a variety of responses I received from the qualitative question, "Thinking about the representation of your skin tone in the media, how do you feel about those representations?" People who are Light Skin mentioned positive representations of their skin tone, but often relayed feeling bad or guilty. For example, participants said:

- "I feel the representations are positive. I feel lighter skin tones have a more positive association especially for women."

- "It usually comes at the cost of those in my racial group with darker skin tones so I feel somewhat guilty. Those with my skin tone are seen as more desirable and are given far more opportunities than others with even slightly darker tone. It's not something I think is fair or that I feel good about."

- "I feel like light skinned black people are more "acceptable" in the main stream media and entertainment and thus used more. I would actually prefer to see darker skinned people."

- "As an African American with lighter skin, my similar image is often presented in a moderately positive light."

For people identified as Medium/Brown Skin tone, the responses varied. Some mentioned that there were positive representations of their skin tone in the media, while others mentioned there were negative representations. For instance, respondents explained:

- "Some representations are good but there are some representations that show stereotype which I do not agree with. Such as how we dress or act. The type of jobs we are portrayed having, etc."
- I am a medium browned skin. Most positive media attention is drawn to individuals with lighter complexions. Medium/Dark Skinned individuals are usually seen in a negative light or are deemed unattractive by the media."
- "I feel that representations of my skin tone in the media are complicated. Growing up, I didn't see many others on screen who look like me, but now in 2019 with a growing social awareness for equality of all sorts of people and equal representations of all sorts of people...it's trending for the better. With movies like Black Panther, Wonder Woman, Captain Marvel, and TV shows like Grey's Anatomy, I can see women and people of color in positions of capability and we are even portrayed as beautiful and so much more than the comedic stereotypes of the past and this makes me feel hopeful and contributes to my increasing sense of self-esteem."
- "Positive for most part, I think my skin tone could be better represented in media."

For people who are Dark Skin, the responses also varied. While many people noted that dark skin tones were represented negatively, many respondents said that these were slowly changing and they were seeing more positive representations:

- "I think they make dark skinned people appear violent."
- "I feel like when it comes to light skin women and dark skin women, the dark skin woman is often given a hard, or rough personality. While the light skin woman is given a nice and sweet personality."
- "There is very limited representation of dark skin tones in social media. However, this is slowly changing as more and more people are trying to promote positive images of dark skin."

- "In today's media black people and more specifically dark skin people of color have a lot of varied positive and equal representation. Movies and TV shows having all or primarily black casts and being critically acclaimed. Nowadays our representation is at an all-time high."

Based on these responses, there are differences between all three groups in how they feel they are represented in the media. These responses are consistent with the literature that points out how there are positive media representations of those who are lighter and negative media representations of those who are darker (Steele 2016). With that said, it is also clear that respondents feel that representation of medium and dark skin people is slowly getting better.

Furthermore, I wanted to understand if skin tone influenced physical attractiveness. According to Harvey et al. (2017), attractiveness is associated with lighter skin tones. Based on the results I found, a person's skin tone does not influence their feelings about their own physical attractiveness. This lack of a clear association may be because there are numerous other factors—beyond skin tone—influencing whether or not people feel physically attractive, such as body shape and size, weight, facial features, and personal style. Indeed, participants in this study may have had their own definitions of what physical attractiveness means to them. However, comparing all three groups, I found that people who are Light Skin feel more positively about their physical attractiveness than those who are Medium and Dark Skin; therefore, it is consistent with Harvey et al.'s (2017) finding about lighter skin and attractiveness. One reason why Light Skin people may feel more physically attractive may be due to more positive representations in the media.

In addition to physical attractiveness, it was surprising to see that people are overall satisfied with their skin tone. Indeed, I would have expected Light Skin people to be more satisfied with their skin tone compared to Dark Skin people. However, there weren't any differences between the two groups. This may be the result of how the question was worded and how people interpreted the term "satisfied," which I discuss as a limitation in more detail below. People who are Medium Skin tone are more satisfied with their skin tone than people who are Dark Skin. And, among the three groups, people who are Dark Skin are more likely to want to change their skin tone, even though they were no more satisfied or dissatisfied

with their skin tone. This finding is consistent with the literature that finds there are more privileges associated with being light skinned (Hunter 2007); therefore, Dark Skin people may want to change their skin tone because they lack these privileges.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I explored the question of whether or not Black people were aware of colorism in their lives and how it affects them. To answer this question, I created a survey that measured physical attractiveness, satisfaction of skin tone, if people would change their skin tone, how people were treated based on skin tone, and perceptions of media. Media was a key factor in people's responses because I found that Light Skin people feel that they have more positive representations in the media than those who are Medium/Brown and Dark Skin. Light Skin people also felt more positive about their physical attractiveness than the other two groups. In terms of satisfaction with skin tone, people who are Medium/Brown Skin are more satisfied than Dark Skin people. Because of this, I also found that Dark Skin people are more likely to want to change their skin tone than the other two groups.

My findings were in line with much of the literature concerning physical attractiveness and people with lighter skin tone. According to Harvey et al. (2017), attraction/affiliation is a specific area that plays an important role in a person of color's life, as lighter skin tones are associated with attractiveness. In my study, People with Light Skin felt positive about their Physical Attractiveness when compared to those who are Medium/Brown and Dark Skin. However, it interesting that people who are Medium/Brown Skin still felt negatively represented in the media. Although existing literature says much about people with lighter skin and people with darker skin, there is not much research about the impact colorism has on people with medium/brown skin tones. Based on the open-ended responses, some people think that media representation of medium/brown and dark skin tones is becoming better, but is changing rather slowly.

There are several limitations to take into consideration with this study. One limitation is the way some questions were asked, specifically for satisfaction of skin tone, if people were treated differently, and physical attractiveness. For example, physical attractiveness could have been better defined for the participants, as it is likely that people interpreted this more broadly than desired. There are many aspects of a person's physicality that could lead them to feel attractive or unattractive (i.e., body weight, shape,

size, hair, personal style, etc.) and this may have been reflected in their responses. In regards to satisfaction with skin tone, results might have been different if I was specific about the term "satisfaction." The statement, "Overall, I am satisfied with my skin tone," is broad and participants may have interpreted the term "satisfied" differently. They may have interpreted "satisfied" as just being "okay" or "good enough," rather than happy with one's skin tone. Similar to satisfaction with skin tone, there could have been a better differentiation of people being treated positively or negatively based on their skin tone. Participants were asked if they had been treated "differently" throughout their life, but I did not consider asking whether participants were treated positively or negatively.

For future research, those who have medium/brown skin tone should be taken into consideration, as previous studies have primarily focused on Light Skin and Dark Skin people. Do Medium/Brown Skin people receive the same disadvantages that Dark Skin people receive, or the same advantages that Light Skin people do? Future research can also be centered around cultural constructions of colorism in different settings and geographic regions. How do Southern or Midwestern cultures and communities of color view skin tone? There should also be more of a focus on young people of color. Younger people, especially today, are constantly on social media. What is being portrayed about their skin tone and what are they doing about it? Young people use their social media to speak out against issues that are impacting them, and it is unclear if colorism is an issue that is currently being addressed by young people on social media.

Skin tone stratification is a significant social topic, especially in communities of color. Most academic discussions are usually around discrimination based on race, but not necessarily discrimination based on skin tone. Black and African American communities are divided—both historically and today—because of this stratification. Light Skin people do receive benefits and advantages, but they feel left out of their own communities (Hunter 2007). Dark Skin people are at a disadvantage, but they are seen as having a greater Black consciousness (Hughes & Hertel 1990). Medium/Brown Skin people may be disadvantaged as well because they are in the middle of the skin tone spectrum. Conversations about the impacts of colorism are happening, but only emerging slowly. It is particularly important to continue

these conversations with younger Black people, given the influence of social media and the perpetuation of Eurocentric beauty standards. Only by doing more research on skin tone stratification in communities of color can we begin solving the issue of colorism in U.S. society.

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ACADEMIC VITA

DIAKA THIAM

SKILLS

- Effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Multilingual- fluent in French, English, and Wolof

- Comprehensive Problem Solving
- Ability to code and analyze data
- Patient and attentive

EDUCATION

AUGUST 2015- MAY2019

Psychological and Social Sciences, BA/ Pennsylvania State University- Abington

EXPERIENCE

JANUARY 2018- PRESENT

Connect Crew Member/ Pennsylvania State University- Abington

- Training students on leadership ability and skills
- Working collectively with students, organizations, and offices
- Creating reports and forms for events and awards

JANUARY 2019- APRIL2019

Intern/ Girls Inc.

- Facilitates Girls Inc. programs in multiple schools
- Interact and act as a mentor for girls between the ages of 7-18
- Creates lesson plans and program outlines for each session

JUNE 2018- AUGUST 2018

Orientation Leader/ Pennsylvania State University- Abington

- Facilitated icebreakers and team building activities for the new student orientation program
- Presented to incoming students on resources available on campus
- Communicated with the family members of new students as well as answer any questions they had

MAY 2017-AUGUST 2017

Data Collection Specialist/ Bartram's Garden

- Surveyed visitors on the renovation of Bartram's Garden

- Conducted systematic observations and environmental assessments

ACTIVITIES

AUGUST 2016- MAY 2018

President, Community Outreach Workers/ Pennsylvania State University- Abington

- Planned on and off campus events to motivate students in getting involved in community service
- Worked towards goals presented for the student organization
- Marketing events through flyers, tabling, and social media

MARCH 2018- MARCH 2018

Head Lion Lead, Alternative Spring Break/ Pennsylvania State University- Abington

- Interviewed participants for the trip
- Led reflections after service projects were completed
- Initiated interactive group and team building activities

SEPTEMBER 2015- APRIL 2017

Research Assistant, ACURA/ Pennsylvania State University- Abington

- Worked on a study on pregnant women and body image by Dr. David Hutson
- Learned to analyze data by coding and transcribing