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Understanding Colorism Through the Perceptions and Social Interactions of African Diasporic Women

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Understading Colorism Through the Perceptions and Social Interactions of African Diasporic Women

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Africana Studies from
The College of William and Mary

by

Ebimene Doubeni

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Abstract

I investigate the ways colorism operates in the lives of ten Afro-Trinidadian/Black women in Trinidad and ten African-American/Black women in the United States. The purpose of my research is to investigate the way colorism is discussed in my participants' college communities. The purpose is to educate the members of the Black communities that I studied about the negative effects of colorism. Entrenched in skin tone hierarchies, the post-slavery countries of the United States and Trinidad are exemplars of the how the social constructs of a racial caste system perpetuates themselves in Black communities. I provide literature on how the racial skin hierarchy affects Black females and what stereotypes are attributed to certain skin tones in both Trinidad and the United States. I explore how these individuals internalize colorism and, by extension, how colorism influences their self-perceptions and perceptions of others. My research will add to the academic discourse of colorism, especially in Trinidad, where there is a dearth of literature on colorism. By instituting a cross-cultural examination, I demonstrate that colorism is a form of intra-racial discrimination that still affects Black communities, locally and abroad. Using the grounded theory approach, I found that a theme that emerged from all twenty participants was the desire to have more discussions of colorism in the academia. In response, I include curriculum-based suggestions to help facilitate discussions in the classroom in the appendix section of the paper.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Coming from a predominately white independent day school in New England, I struggled with transitioning to William and Mary, a prestigious university in the South. Many of the Black peers I met during my time at William and Mary came from predominantly Black environments and areas such as: Portsmouth, Richmond, Hampton, Norfolk and other places in Virginia. Through them, I have been exposed to new social concepts and ways of thinking about intraracial discrimination and interracial discrimination that I was not aware of before I came to college.

Before I started my freshman year at William and Mary, I participated in the Preparing for Life as a University Student (PLUS) program offered to incoming freshman to "provide a positive, transitional summer experience between high school and college life" (PLUS, 2017). At PLUS, I was subjected to several taunts and teases by my Black peers because I did not fit into their interpretations of what it meant to be Black. My peers would tell me that I acted like a "light skin" because of the way I dressed and talked. Smith & Jones (2011) describe the situation I had at PLUS and situations like these as an example of borderism, which is "associated with those who 'cross the color line' by choosing not to align themselves with perceived Black behaviors or racial identity" (p. 1568). Socialized in predominantly white spaces and growing up with parents and parental figures that identify as either African, Caribbean, or White, I was not aware of many forms of discrimination that occur in the African-American community. My mannerisms and the color of my skin were constantly subjected to criticism at PLUS. Additionally, many of the Black peers at PLUS believed that I did not have an authentic Black experience because I came from a higher socioeconomic status so I never experienced true

hardship. Gullickson (2005) contextualizes the phenomenon of borderism and colorism as not mutually exclusive, but together, they are used to form the basis for matters of intraracial class discrimination that is experienced by many Blacks including myself. Hill (2002) reflects on the racial skin hierarchy that resulted from slavery where "the mulatto class of African Americans [and lighter skinned Blacks] was able to produce a higher status occupation, higher income, and more years of schooling than their darker skin counterparts" (p. 77). Although, my Black peers or myself never classified my skin color as a lighter complexion skin, they grouped me with people who had lighter skin because of my socioeconomic status.

I took *Math 101: Calculus* my first semester at college and had some difficulty understanding some of the material. I asked an African-American male student to help me with one of the homework assignments. Instead, the classmate jokingly refused and explained that his refusal was because of my darker skin. After my initial shock, I recomposed myself and questioned him further about his statement. He eventually expounded that he believed I did not have the intellectual capacity to grasp the mathematical concepts needed to complete my homework assignment because of the darkness of my skin. I was slightly perturbed by his comment because I expected those types of comments from white students and not from students who are in my racial group.

As I continued on in my freshman year I noticed that other Black students at William and Mary used skin color variations to discriminate against other Black students. Witnessing this phenomenon underway at William and Mary, I wanted to learn more about Black-on-Black discrimination based on color, which I later found out was called colorism. During the first semester of my sophomore year I took *AFST 480: Independent Study* to learn more about colorism on my own. In my research, I came across a prominent scholar of colorism, Hall (2002)

who believes that colorism impacts women more than men because a woman's status and social mobility is determined by her skin color, which symbolizes her beauty. By the end of the semester, I concluded that I wanted to study colorism within the female population because I wanted to learn more about experiences dealing with colorism that were similar to my experience.

The second semester of my sophomore year I took another Africana Studies course, *AFST 306: Caribbean Languages,* to learn about Caribbean culture. As a half-Trinidadian, I choose to compose a twelve-page research paper for the final assignment, to gain more knowledge of the history of Trinidad along with the influences of colorism in the Trinidadian society. After spending a semester investigating colorism in Trinidad, I experienced what Toni Morrison coined "rememory" with my own experiences with colorism growing up. Euba (2007) cites Toni Morrison and states that rememory is the process recalling upon the past to give expression to buried memories. In writing this paper, I recalled experiences of when I was younger on that I had long forgotten. I remembered my family making comments about my brother looking more like my Nigerian father because he had darker skin. I also remembered comments my grandmother made about my skin getting darker from being out in the sun and needing to put bleach on it to lighten my skin. Remembering these memories alongside the findings in my paper made me curious to learn more about colorism in Trinidad. Additionally, in my findings I did not discover many sources about Trinidad that discussed colorism besides blogs. Therefore, I decided that part of my research aim would be to support Trinidadian scholarship on colorism by adding literature on colorism through my research.

In accordance with my experience with colorism on my college campus, Busey (2014) shares those same sentiments by stating that Black students discriminate against Black students

on college campuses based on skin color. Bond and Cash (1992) believe colorism exists in the Black community on college campuses because Black college students hold generalized biases against skin color. Historically, at the university level, in the Black community, a person's status in organizations such as fraternities and sororities, schools and social clubs was based on their skin tone and hair texture (Andrews 2004; Hill, 2002). Interracial discrimination is widely discussed on college campuses but there is still a lack of discussion of intraracial discrimination (Busey, 2014; Bishop, 2007; Yip et al, 2010). This skin tone stratification that developed in the Black community in the Americas emerged in slavery when Whites " espoused a White supremacist ideology which held that persons of African descent were innately inferior to Whites. Whiteness became identified with all that is civilized, virtuous, and beautiful; blackness, in opposition, with all that is lowly, sinful, and ugly (Hill , 2002, p.77). Variations of skin color in the Black community in the Americas developed the children of a white slaveholding father and a Black enslaved mother. Since these mulattoes were closer to whiteness they tended to have higher levels of education and higher status occupation (Hill, 2002). To preserve their status, this class of mulattoes, or lighter skinned Blacks, segregated themselves into a separate community. As a result, "they actively discriminated against their darker-skinned [community members]. In many ways, this elite class acted no differently than the White groups" (Russell et al, 1992, p. 24).

Several scholars that I discovered during my academic career at William and Mary have furthered my interest and understanding in colorism. During my junior year, I took *ENGL 365: Early Black American Literature* course and read novels that contained themes of colorism such as; *Contending Forces* by Pauline Hopkins, *The Wife and His Youth and Other Stories of the Color-Line* by Charles Chestnut, and *The Garies and Their Friends* by Frank J. Webb. Although

these novels are historical fiction, these literary works demonstrate how the elements of colorism have existed in the Black community for decades. From these books I was able to gain a historical perspective of colorism and see how these tropes have perpetuated in the Black community from the time period that these books were written to now. Also, these novels convey similar experiences of colorism that I read about previous in my research in my other classes.

Knight and Marciano (2013) believe the best way to address problems in the academy is through educating students on issues surrounding diversity. The many stories I read on colorism and the effects it has on the Black female population of the African diaspora inspired me to want to share my experience with colorism alongside on the narratives of twenty Black women that I interviewed. I decided that I wanted to do an honors thesis project to explore narratives of colorism from Black female students in Trinidad and the United States. By bringing their narratives to the forefront of my research, I am able to add to the scholarship of Africana Studies by contributing the perspectives of how my twenty Black female internalize colorism. In this paper I will examine the differences and similarities of how colorism affected the experiences of ten Afro-Trinidadian women at the University of West Indies and ten African-American women at the William and Mary. I will look at how their background influences such as: peers, family members, culture and past experiences, were internalized in these individuals and how they affect theses females self –perceptions and perceptions of others.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2. 1: What is Colorism?

Colorism is a form of intraracial discrimination that exists within the Black community, locally and abroad, where people are grouped based on skin color, hair texture, and facial features. These external characteristics determine the status of these people in Black communities, which bestows privilege to some while making some opportunities unavailable to those who fall outside of set colorist standards for that community. However, the Black color complex is deeply embedded into the Black consciousness and effects Black people's perceptions of themselves along with their perceptions of others. The function of colorism is to "perceive or behave toward members of racial category based on the lightness or darkness of their skin tone" (Viren, 2013, p. 250).

Per many Black women, skin color that is closer to whiteness is preferred because it acts as social capital. Due to Eurocentric beauty norms, darker-skinned women are often disadvantaged because dark skin is not seen as beautiful, especially in the dating and marriage markets (Keith and Herring, 1991). Hunter (2002) argues that a "light skin tone is interpreted as beauty, and beauty operate[s] as a social capital for women. Women who possess this form of capital (beauty) are able to convert it into economic capital, educational capital, or another form of social capital" (p.177). Hunter's concept of social capital coincides with Wilder and Cain's (2011) definition of colorism, which denotes colorism as "an intra-racial system of inequality based on skin color, hair texture, and facial features that bestows privilege and values on physical attributes that are close to white" (p.578). Diving further into literature of Wilder and Cain, Wilder and Cain (2010) completed a study where they interviewed twenty-six Black

women on colorism. Through their study, it was proven that color differences are learned, reinforced, and in some cases contested within families, ultimately shaping Black women's perspectives and experiences with colorism. Based on of their study, I decided that I also wanted to include aspects of how colorism is depicted in the private life of Black families and influences how Black females interact with others in their public life.

Even though Hunter, and Wilder and Cain's definition of colorism are representative of the socio-historical norms and attitudes of colorism, it is not the most complete definitions of colorism that is necessary for my project. Maddox and Gray (2002) define colorism as a "tendency to perceive or behave toward members of a racial category based on the lightness or darkness of their skin. More specifically, it is argued that people attend to differences in skin tone and attribute meaning to those differences in accordance with socio-historical norms" (p.250). Most scholars agree on the advantages that lighter skin has in the social stratification of color but with my curriculum model, I want to explore the many dimensions of colorism for people with light skin and dark skin and the meanings assigned to different skin tones.

*2.2: Colorism and Female Beaut*y

Richardson-Stovall (2012) argues that hegemonic white culture complicates racial identity for minorities, especially Black women's identities, which are complicated by systematic oppression and the intersecting identities of race and gender. Black women are continuously left out of the narratives and images portrayed by the media because their skin color does not reflect Eurocentric standards of beauty. Richardson-Stovall (2012) argues that voices of African-American females have not been heard in media because mainstream-media images of beauty, defining certain women as beautiful and others as not, is a form of sociopolitical control that empowers some and disempowers others. Due to the norms created by the media standardized

beauty has almost become unattainable for Black woman. However, certain exceptions are made with lighter skin black woman.

Craig (2002) articulates how Black and white women are viewed differently in national beauty ideals. White women dominate the media and are represented in the various institutions that perpetuate these norms such as beauty contests, advertisements, magazines, movies and television programming. Craig (2002) expounds further by stating, "Black women were either excluded from them or included in images that reinforced Eurocentric beauty ideals" (p.5). Lighter-skinned Black women are able to fit more easily into the norms of beauty than darker skinned women because their features and physical attributes are closer to white features and attributes. Women with lighter skin are able to conform to white beauty norms because their appearance is either racially mixed or ethnically ambiguous. Griffin (2011) explains this belief by articulating that these women are seen as "beautiful because of [their] proximity to whiteness and…because of [their] Black 'blood' " (p.139). This creates a divide between light skin and dark skin Black women as well as their representation in media and beauty ideals. Kellner (2003) argues "radio, television, film, and other products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our very identities; our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to be male or female; our sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality; and of 'us' and 'them" (p.9). Media acts as a social constructor by creating and shaping images of identity for people. As a Black woman, seeing images of beauty crafted around an ideal that does not reflect Black beauty can hinder positivity around a Black woman's beauty and body.

2.3 Colorism in Trinidad

As a post colonial and former slave society, Trinidad has a racial skin hierarchy that justified white and lighter skin tones as the skin tones with the most privilege while solidified

darker skinned people as the laboring and enslaved populations. Within this racial skin hierarchy, the colonizers divided the oppressed groups by skin color. Khan (2004) describes Trinidad as a mixed society because all of the cultures that are in Trinidad have to coexist with one another for it to survive on the small island. The country of Trinidad is unique due to its multiethnic influences from many different countries around the world such as Spain, France, Britain during the colonial era, and India in a post colonial era. The current demographics of Trinidad are 35.4% East Indian, 34.2%, and the rest are different ethnicities. (CIA Factbook, 2016). Currently Indo-Trinidadians has a slight majority in Trinidad, which has affected the social and political atmosphere of Trinidad. Trinidad is regarded as one of the most cosmopolitan places in the world because of the mixing of multiple racial and cultural entities (Crowley, 1957). Braithwaite (1953) acknowledges that although there is an amalgamation of the different cultures, the racial groups in Trinidad practice endogamy, buy adopting the ideology of marrying lighter skinned partners.

The first Indians arrived in Trinidad after the emancipation of slavery and during the period of Apprenticeship from 1834 to 1838. By the end of the 19th century, Trinidad had become an immigrant society with more than 40 percent of the population not being born in Trinidad or of African descent" (Brereton, 1981, 12). These East Indians were recruited to replace the Africans to work on the sugar colony. Like the Africans their placement on the sugar plantations was dependent on their skin color. The darker skinned Indians were unfavorable contrasted with the more European looking Indians who were stereotyped as more tractable. Khan (2009) describes the predicament of the Indo-Trinidadian has "twice colonialized –In India under the British rule and then in the British West Indies" (p. 102). In the British West Indies, Indo-Trinidadians who preformed more manual labor jobs had more similarities with the Afro-

Trinidadians by their facial features and skin color. The Indo-Trinidadians who had lighter skin generally were more likely to join the higher ranks of society (Braithwaite, 1953; Khan, 2009). Due to the twice-colonialized effect, Indians who came to Trinidad only reinforced the skin color hierarchy that was already put in place.

Smith (1974) shares a narrative of a woman from Trinidad who was traumatized by colorism so badly that " her mother found it necessary to have her treated by a psychiatrist at an early age. She believed that she is ugly because she is not white" (786).

Stewart's (2004) examination of contemporary Trinidadian society stresses that lighter-skinned Black people are still the more favorable skin complexion when it comes to attaining a higher pay with a higher-status job. Many darker-skinned [people] still "see their color as a handicap in their efforts to secure good jobs, access to education, decent housing" (Barnes, 1994, 472). People with darker skin are generally excluded from having jobs such as working at the front desk at the banks or being store clerks because in these positions people are picked not necessarily on their credentials but on their appearance (Barnes, 1994). Images of lighter-skinned Blacks make up a majority of the Black people that appear in social media. In Trinidad the distinction between skin colors became evident as the people of mixed African and European ancestry formed a new middle class. This new class did not bridge the social and economic gap between the wealthy plantation owners and the laborers but instead proved that race, skin color and status existed interchangeably (Williams, 1988).

Since I did not find a substantial amount of literature on colorism on Trinidad outside of social media platforms, the majority of my literature on colorism in Trinidad includes blog post from Trinidadian women. One blogger, Akilah Holder (2012), talks about feeling a sense of animosity from darker-skinned females in Trinidad because she thinks they are jealous of her

because darker skinned women are labeled as unattractive and unintelligent. She also talks about how colorism, is not a widely discussed topic in Trinidad but it still does exist because many darker women that she knows have a lot of insecurities about their skin tone. Her narrative on her blog reaffirms my aim to add to the literature on colorism in Trinidad. It also reaffirms my other aim to ensure that Black females do not feel this same level of isolation as these individuals Holder mentions in her blog

Another woman, Mailiaka Crichlow (2014), talks about how she felt ugly growing up because she had more Afrocentric features than her sister, who had red skin and curly hair. In Trinidad, red skin, refers to Black people who have lighter skin. Most of the time people who have red skin are a mixture of two races or people who have really light skin color. (Daily Express, 2010). Red women in particular find themselves in a precarious position because they are objectified by men and hated by most women because of the color of their skin and the curlier texture of her hair (Daily Express, 2010). She recalls that many people made comments to her mothers about how they could not understand why her Mailiaka was so dark. Growing up, Mailiaka felt out of place because she felt that Trinidad was a country that embraced the mixed identity and, consequently the mixed look. As someone who did not have the mixed look she felt she had no place in Trinidadian society. For the most part, Mailiaka felt ignored in comparison to those who had a lighter skin tone and curlier hair texture because those features are considered more beautiful than the darker skin, broader nose and kinkier hair that she has.

Similar to the United States, Trinidad there are spaces where all skin types are accepted, and there are spaces where lighter or darker skin is preferred over the other. Ayanna (2011), a blog writer shares:

"Trinidad, where 'darkie' takes root and flourishes in the local parlance with t-shirts available by a local designer proclaiming, 'I love my Trini darkie,' (as well as 'my Trini reds' and 'my Trini browning'), the term functions as an important reaffirmation of Afro-descendant beauty, by calling attention to a certain skin tone in all its chocolate splendor" (Ayanna, 2011).

Ayanna talks about shops in Trinidad promulgating positive messages about Black people in Trinidad on consumer goods. Another example of Trinidadian culture supporting all skin tones is in a story told by an unnamed blogger who is a lighter skinned woman. She recalls being taunted with names such as: "Yellow, Red Monkey, Beck-a-Neck and Pale. Also [I] had no blood and that I should stand in the sun, that I was not finished baking and that I was raw flour" (Author unknown, 2010). Although colorism is a system that benefits those who are at the top of the skin hierarchy, there have been instances in Trinidad where women express that their lighter skin tone did not benefit them. The unknown blogger also reports that other women have told her that they These women also report being taunted and teased for their fair skin in their Black communities because their features did not reflect stereotypical Black features (Author unknown, 2010).

As a multicultural society, Trinidad attempts to have holidays that are all inclusive of all ethnic and racial groups. Afro-Trinidadians have adopted the idea of Carnival as a way to reclaim their African ancestry and celebrate their African culture. The concept of "Carnival was first introduced by the French, although it was soon taken over by African Slaves" Brereton, 18, 1993). After emancipation, "the liberated slaves took over Carnival as a way of celebrating their delivery from slavery" (Jackson, 1988, 214). Later as more ethnicities began to settle in Trinidad, Carnival "began to represent all the social, political, and 'racial' tensions of Trinidadian society.

Currently, carnival is a holiday to celebrate all different types of people regardless of race, religion, skin color or hair texture. In Carnival all people in Trinidad; their cultures and identities are affirmed (Khan 2004).

2.4 Colorism in the United States

With the skin tone stratification developed in slavery, Blacks of mixed ancestry – enslaved mother and White slaveholding father –were treated differently than their darker counterparts because lighter skin placed them higher in the racial hierarchy. As a result, Blacks with a mixed ancestry or lighter skin tone "enjoyed prestige among the darker slaves. Because of this structure of privilege, the slaves viewed light skin color as a desirable asset and as symbolic of humane treatment" (Keith and Herring, 1991, p. 763). This shaped how Black people in the Black community viewed skin tone because they saw their fellow light skin community members humanized because of the lightness of their skin.

The ideology of lighter skin being the preferred skin tone in the Black community continued into the 20th century as distinctions between darker-skinned Blacks and lighter skinned Blacks were made by their socioeconomic mobility and access to education. According to Frazier (1957), there was an increase of darker skin Blacks in the higher socioeconomic classes after World War I by the gradual extension of educational opportunities to the masses. Therefore more Black people had access to education and more Black people were able to become Black professionals, regardless of their skin tone. These new dark-skinned Black elites were then able to marry the old middle-class Blacks of mixed ancestry, which caused the Black elite class to darken (Landry, 1987). As a result the definition of the word "Black" and meanings attached skin tone in the color complex changed. According to Keith and Herring (1991) darker skin coloring slowly lost its negative connotations and associated stereotypes.

Black aesthetic attitudes fundamentally changed with the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the Black is Beautiful movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These movements encouraged the Black community to no longer adhere to Eurocentric standards of beauty and redefine their own standards of beauty with Afrocentric traits (Keith and Herring, 2011). Even with the change in the definition of Blackness and the inclusion of darker skinned Blacks into the Black elite, the remnants of the privileges of having lighter skin remained intact in the Black community. This visual marker affects Black women the most because it is believed that women with a lighter skin are more feminine. Women have higher skin tone dissatisfaction than men because they view their "skin complexion as an important indicator of their physical attractiveness" (Viren, 2013, p. 473). Women receive pressures from different forms of social media, which influence their idealization of a preferred skin color. One woman reflects on the type of messages she sees on Twitter that are related to "dark girls" or "dark skin". She reflects that she knows "that [she] will find numerous jokes, abuse and derogatory comments directed at women with skin like mine, often started and circulated by boys and young men, some of whom have dark skin themselves" (Phoenix, 2014, p. 108).

Magazines have a common practice of lightening the pictures of women of color on the front of their magazine. In 2010, Elle magazine was the center of criticism when the magazine was suspected of lightening Gabourey Sidibe's skin on a magazine cover (Leach, 2010). Also Loreal Cosmetics was also under fire for lightening Beyoncé's skin during an advertisement for its hair care products (Clout, 2008). Usually, Black women that are presented in the media reflect Eurocentric ideals of body type and facial features (Sekayi, 2003). As a result, there has been a global increase of cosmetic surgery and other procedures that could potentially help women achieve their ideal skin tone and body type in accordance with Eurocentric beauty norms.

2.5 Statement of Purpose

Critical race theory is an application of critical theory by intersecting the examination of society and culture with race and power. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001) critical race theory examines the existing power structures created by white privilege and supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color. Richardson -Stovall (2012) states, "There is tremendous power in media's ability, as a central cultural institution, to define and promote the hegemonic values, beliefs, and definitions of beauty for those who consume it" (p. 94). This study aims to explore how my participants reflect and acknowledge the complex and varied realities of social constructs and standards of beauty within the frame of colorism.

Chapter 3

Methods

3.1 Cultural Study

My research is considered as a cultural study because it focuses on the narratives of those who are marginalized in modern culture, and sources of the study are drawn from cultural and social history, psychoanalysis, and anthropology through analysis of text, transcripts, and observations of everyday life (Bennett, 2005; Gray 2014). My research will provide a sampling of the marginalized voices of Black women that are impacted by colorism. Since I did a cross-cultural examination for my honors thesis, I had to complete my interviews over the course of two summers. In the summer of 2015, I traveled to Trinidad to interview ten Afro-Trinidadians at the University of West Indies. In the summer of 2016, I interviewed ten African-Americans at my home university, College of William and Mary.

3.2 Participant Sampling

The people I interviewed at the University of West Indies and the College of William and Mary were between the ages of 18 and 25, with the majority being between the ages of 20 and 22. Since I did not know anyone at the University of West Indies, I randomly approached 18 Afro-Trinidadians females. I introduced myself, asked them about their self-identification and talked briefly about my research. Later, I emailed all of them to see if they were still interested in following up with an interview, only six of them responded back to me. From those six interviews, I used chain referral sampling (Pollock, 2012) to ask my participants if they could refer me to more participants for my research. Finding participants at the College of William and Mary was not as difficult as the University of West Indies because William and Mary is my home university. I asked several Black females with whom I've had conversations about

colorism and my research if I could interview them for my research project. I asked approximately fifteen people and ended up interviewing ten people at William and Mary. Since the participants at William and Mary know me personally, they had a better understanding of what I was looking for in my study and were able to give more detailed answers.

I understood that the populations that I chose were multiethnic because of the effects of colonialism and the displacement of Africans in the Americas. Therefore, I decided to broaden my search by extending it to people who are of African descent and identify as either African-American or Afro-Trinidadian. The participants also had to be born and lived the majority of their lives in their respective countries. I did not recruit participants by skin color or classify them in the study based on skin tone because my research is dependent on the self-perceptions of the participants and not by established skin color categorizations. Since my interviews are semi-structured and conducted in a conversational style, I decided that it would be more important to reflect upon the information that was discussed in the interviews than to judge what skin complexion the interviewees had.

3.3 Interview Questions

I submitted my questions to the Student Internal Review Board and the Protection of Human Subjects Committee. Since my research included two different sampling pools, I decided to use the same questions for both populations in order to more effectively compare and contrast the experiences of my participants from different countries. My interviews were semi- structured, which mean I had a pre-approved "list of issues and questions to be covered, but may not [have dealt] with all of them in each interview" (Gray, 2014, p. 385). Gray (2014) describes ethnographic interviewing as fundamentally different from other forms of interviewing because the data gathered is a co-production between the interviewer and interviewee. Ethnographic

interviewing "encourages interviewers to shape the questions being asked in the form of semi-structured questions and the interviewer gently guides the conservation as a conversation partner" (Gray, 2014, 451). As the ethnographic interviewer, I am to serve as the biographer of the narrative of others while also remaining part of the research study by sharing my experiences with colorism (Coffey, 1999).

Cress et al (2013) emphasizes the importance of creating rapport with your participants so that you are not the researcher that is working as an agent but as someone who is benefitting the community. By sharing my narrative, I was able to establish rapport between my participants and myself. As the interviewer, I worked on becoming a conversational partner that would gently guide the conversation so that my interviewees would feel more comfortable sharing more intimate details about themselves. Since I wanted to get as much detail as possible, I decided to have my interview questions dive right into the topic that I was studying.

In the debrief process, before the interview, I would start polite conversation to establish rapport with the participants. I asked some background information such as their age, where they were from, and how they decided to self-identify to ensure that they fit all of my qualifications for my research. The questions were intentionally open-ended, so the participants could answer them any way they wished. Also in the debriefing process, I explained what colorism is to ensure that my participants fully understood what I was looking for in my study. I also shared my personal narrative to show that their narratives are unique, but also that they were not alone in their experience. This was especially important for the population that I was interviewing in Trinidad because I was a stranger to them. Before the interview, they did not have any background information on my research or me, unlike my American participants, so I had to

establish rapport very quickly in order for the participants to open up about very personal details about themselves.

At the beginning of the interview, I took care to explain in detail the consent form and tell my participants that their identities would be kept private because I was going to assign them pseudonyms. I recorded, transcribed their interviews, and saved them on a password-protected computer that only I have access to. While I was recording their responses to the questions, I took detailed notes so that as I was transcribing, I would have a point of reference to refer back to if needed. I also explained that participation in the interview was voluntary, they could cancel responses to the interview at any time, refrain from answering questions, or decide not to complete the interview. Each participant was compensated ten dollars for their time regardless if they chose to complete the interview or not. In my case, all twenty of my participant not only completed the interview but answered all of the questions that I asked.

The interviewees answered questions on intraracial discrimination, their social interactions, and personal experiences with colorism. Within these questions, the participants had the opportunity to expand upon the questions by addressing other aspects of their identity (socioeconomic status, religion, ethniticy, etc.) or experiences of discrimination they had outside of the Black community that might have affected their day-to-day activities.

3.4 Interview Specifics

Most of my participants were open to discussing the questions. Some were more excited and willingly provided more information and context to their experiences with colorism. The interviews that occurred at William and Mary were longer than the ones in Trinidad on average because the participants at William and Mary were more familiar with me. The interviews where I felt that the participant and I had developed better rapport lasted more than 35 minutes. I had a

few interviews that were under 25 minutes. In those interviews, the participants gave more concise answers. They answered the questions rather than created a conversation around colorism. Also there were interviews where the participants did not think that colorism affected them because they did not see themselves as people who were on extreme ends of the skin-tone spectrum.

The interviews that occurred in Trinidad occurred in locations that the students were familiar and comfortable with; the interviews were completed in private classrooms in academic buildings. The majority of the interviews that occurred at the College of William and Mary were conducted in Blow Hall 236, the William and Mary Student Undergraduate Research Experience (WMSURE) conference room. This room provided a secure and private area in which the participants were able to speak freely about the topics at hand. Some of the students did not want to meet in Blow 236, so I met them in the privacy of their dorms and dorm study lounges.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Grounded Theory Approach

For my research methodology, I took a grounded theory approach, in which I developed a theory from the subjects being studied. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define grounded theory as a theory that is "discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon" (Charmaz, 2012, p. 23). Grounded theory uses research designed by the researcher, which allows for the qualitative data to speak for itself (Gray, 2014). In grounded theory, a systematic approach is developed to design and analyze data by building complexities and including context (Flick, 2009; Gray, 2014). Grounded theory is understood as a general method of comparative analysis, which is used to disprove and challenge previous and current epistemologies. As an inductive technique, it is a systematic generalization of theory from research. These research procedures and findings emerged from conceptual categories. My research is meant to assess the experiences my participants have had with colorism and use the data collected from my interviews to theorize a more inclusive understanding of colorism.

Hall and Callery (2001) criticize grounded theory because it assumes that the data that is collected reflects reality and are independent of the subjective interpretations of the researcher. My research reflects solely the reality of the female participants in the study, which does not reflect the populations that exist outside of the interviews. My research does not aim to interpret how colorism operates in the African-Americans and Afro-Trinidadians communities but instead aims to relay the experiences of the twenty participants that were interviewed. Glaser (1992) also states that grounded theory does not use any form of verification because my research is meant to

generate a hypothesis and not to test it. My research exists as a result of my data collection from my participants. My research is still valuable because it works to expand upon preconceived concepts of how colorism is constructed in different societies and works to integrate previous knowledge with new theories and begins a conversation about the complexities of Black experiences.

The definition of grounded theory by Strauss and Glaser (1967) takes on the North American logic and approach to inquiry with their emphases on empirical fit with data, efficient strategies, successful theoretical outcomes, usefulness for policy and practice, and skepticism toward earlier theories as well as on personal career advancement. Smith (1999) discusses how this qualitative research method only demonstrates colonialist forms of knowledge and does not reflect on marginalized opinions of society. Therefore, for my study grounded theory has been altered and changed to reflect my needs as the researcher and ensure that my participants' experiences were being depicted as accurately as possible.

My thesis is a cross-cultural examination of how colorism manifests in different environments as well as how these cultures view colorism similarly. Although, grounded theory is a theoretical framework, I will be using it to structure the data collection and analysis of my thesis. Locke (2001) notes that grounded theorists primarily focus on data collection and theory building instead of the cultural aspects of the context of which the data is collected and the theory is built. As a cross-cultural examination, I gathered literature of colorism to accurately reflect the participants' experiences of colorism within their own environments.

4.2 Narrative and Reflexive Approach

Like a narrative analysis approach my data collection is at the center of my thesis. Narrative analysis is "used to cast light on the cultures, complexities and contradictions in

organizations" (Gray, 2014, 166). As a narrative study, I am focusing on the information provided by my interviewees on how they contextualize colorism in their respective societies. To more effectively cast light on the complexities of colorism, I connect my personal narrative to the narratives of my participants to demonstrate that the system of inequality created by colorism is widespread in Black communities.

Since my research was influenced by my own personal interactions with colorism, my research naturally correlates with a reflexive approach. To allow reflexivity in research, there has to be a established relationship with the researcher and the subject of study (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Like Berger (2001), I discussed my own personal experience with colorism as a female, which I used to compare with the other twenty experiences of the females of the African diaspora. As a qualitative study, I am using the personal experiences to understand how the societies of Trinidad and the United States construct colorism and to gain a better understanding of how colorism operates in these societies from the perspective of my participants. I chose Trinidad and the United States because, as a person who identities with both cultures, it was easier for me to become invisible by "immersing [myself] into the norms and behaviors of the group being studied" (Gray, 2012, 444) because I am aware of cultures and traditions of both countries.

4.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is defined as "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.6; Boyatzis, 1998). I used thematic analysis and grounded theory to bring out important findings and patterns in data collection that relate to and brings further

context to my research question. The themes are crucial to my research because they capture aspects in the data that relate to my research question and create a pattern of meaning in the data that I collected (Fine, 2002).

Braun and Clarke (2006) also talk about using thematic analysis as a realist method, "which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants" (p.10). The focus of my research is to highlight the experiences of my participants and to reflect the realities that these females have constructed due to their personal experiences. Braun and Clarke (2006) also discuss taking a semantic approach to thematic analysis by ensuring that the "themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written" (p.14). Since my research is embedded in grounded theory where the participants shape my research it is important that I do not assume what the participants are inferring but report exactly what they say to accurately create a method to address the issues that these women face in their community.

In order to do this effectively and efficiently, I followed a particular set of rules created by Gray (2014) on transcribing data and taking notes during interviews. He suggests that interviews should be transcribed as soon as possible to help draw out and code for themes and patterns that may also exist in later interviews. Since I completed twenty interviews it was sometimes hard to read through every interview to pick out themes. Therefore, I used the notes that I took during my interviews to help find quotes that related to the other findings in my interviews (Gray, 2014).

Frith and Gleeson (2004) take an inductive, "bottom up", approach to thematic analysis. Patton (1990) says that an inductive approach is important when the identified themes are closely linked to the data. This theoretical framework is important to ensure that the methods match what

the researcher wants to know in relation to their research question. The themes and patterns that I picked out of the data that I collected were almost identical to the questions that I asked during the interview to ensure that the themes were overly represented in my research.

I used the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Gray (2014) and Braun and Clarke (2006). As they suggest in the first step I familiarized myself with my data; I read and re-read my interviews and created initial categories, which could potentially change later during the emergence of new and clearer themes (Gray 2014). In the second and third step, I created themes and initial codes. From these themes and codes, I pulled from passages that my participants spoke about that would relate to the themes that I picked out (Gray, 2014; Braun and Clarke, 2006). After matching themes and passages from my participants, I found more themes and reclassified the old ones to better fit the ideas presented in my interviews. Using the fourth phase of thematic analysis, I was able to create main themes that emerged from my data: self-esteem and self- image, feelings of isolations, family discussion of colors, peer discussions of colorism and stereotypes of skin color in the Black community. As Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend for the fifth step, I constantly tied my themes back to the questions and literature and refined my themes to synthesize my research findings with my research question. Finally, I selected the most compelling statements from my participants that relate my themes to my research question and literature.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis

5. 1: Trinidad Sample

The participants I interviewed in Trinidad all identified as either Afro-Trinidadian or Black. For the purposes of my interview and my research, I will use the terms Afro-Trinidadian and Black interchangeable. All of my interviewees reported witnessing or experiencing a form of colorism throughout their lifetimes. The age range for my participants, at the time of the interview, was between the ages of 18 and 25. For my study, my research questions, which can be found in appendix one, asked my participants to reflect on their perception of the color of their skin. While I was in Trinidad, I interviewed five people who perceived themselves as having dark skin, four people who perceive themselves as having brown skin, and one person who perceived herself as having light skin. More details about my Trinidadian sample can be found in appendix two.

5.1.1: Self-Esteem and Self-Image

All of the participants that I interviewed reflected on the fact that colorism was something that affected them subconsciously and consciously through their conversations. My participants acknowledged that as they developed through adulthood they had to adapt their responses and behaviors so that other people's comments would not affect them as much as they used to. Sheryl states, "Well every now and then I will have issues. Like I am too this or I am too that. I have been told that I was too light or too dark but it doesn't really occur to me. I just view myself person, not as a light-skinned person, or a brown-skinned person. Just as a person."
More specifically in my sample, two people expressed that in their youth the remarks that were made to them about their skin tone had a negative effect on their self-image and self-esteem.

However, they did reflect on the fact that as they got older their perceptions of themselves changed through their own personal development.

Danielle also reflects on the changes of her self-esteem and self-image from her childhood to adulthood; "I think my self esteem dropped really low. I used to sit by myself a lot of the time...It changed because I am further in my education now so they are starting to see the potential in me. So they are not worried about this black and thing." Danielle says that a lot of her self -esteem issues stemmed from the comments that her family made about skin color. However, as her parents saw that her dark skin did not limit her ability to be successful, they changed their opinions about her and her dark skin.

Patricia spoke about the interactions that she had with her peers that encouraged her to use bleaching cream. During our interview, Patricia talked about a conversation that she had with a friend at a farm that she worked at one summer: "She was telling me that her cousin was telling her to use some cream that would help her lighten her skin color to get it back. So she told me that I could use that. Which I actually did try to use it to bring back my skin color complexion"

Patricia mentions that after working in the sun for the summer her skin tanned, so she used bleaching cream to lighten her skin. The in interview Patricia mentions her bias against darker skin and her desire to maintain her complexion or potentially make it lighter.

Patricia also talked about emotions that come up when she is around her family members, especially those who are on the opposite extremes of the Black color complex:

Sometimes around my cousins I feel less beautiful because most of them are lighter than I am. They don't say anything to make me feel uncomfortable but I am conscious of the fact that I am darker [than them]. Sometimes I think my mother could have found a better man. My father is really dark, I don't hate my

father because of his skin. However, I think I would prefer not to show people

pictures of my father..

Patricia admitted throughout the interview that she is biased and in some way discriminatory

toward people with darker skin tones. She goes on further to mention that she attempts to avoid

people who are very dark-skinned because she does not think that highly of them.

5.1.2: Feelings of Isolation

Half of the participants that I interviewed explicitly reported that they did have any

feelings of isolation from their communities because of their experiences handling colorism in

their communities. One of my participants, Sheryl, reported that she felt that her peers in her

primary school attempted to make her feel isolated from her family by continuously bringing up

the fact that she was much lighter than everyone else in her family. Even though they attempted

to make her feel isolated, the participant reported that since she was very secure with her

relationship with her family; these comments did not affect her.

Danielle reported feeling isolated from her family because of the negative comments that

she received from her family members about her darker skin tone. She remembers, "I felt like I

was lower than they are and they were being accepted and I wasn't. So everything that my

parents would take their side on I felt it was because they were light skin and I was dark".

Danielle believes that she was treated differently in her family because she had darker skin. She

mentions that her relationship with her family improved when she began to pursue higher

education while her relationship with her lighter-skinned sisters did not.

5.1.3: Family Discussions of Colorism

The majority of the participants that I interviewed mentioned experiences or

conversations that they had with members of their family that played a role in their

understanding of colorism. The majority of the Trinidadian participants reported that their family members perceive lighter skin as the preferred skin tone in many instances over darker skin.

Nicole discussed the influence of the relationship that she had with her grandmother and the role that played in how she viewed color.

I think sometimes it probably made me wonder if I would look prettier if I was slightly lighter in complexion. I heard [her] make comments like don't walk in the sun too much because you'll get dark. So try to stay out of the sun so you can keep your complexion and not get any darker.

Nicole mentions that when she was younger she would think that sometimes it was better to have lighter skin because of all the negative comments her grandmother would make about her skin color and other parts of her body

Danielle also accounts feeling of suicide she had while she was growing up in her house with an older sister that poked fun of her because Danielle had darker skin. She shares, "Well I was really young. I used to hear [negative comments about my skin tone] constantly from my older sister and I could not fight with her. There had a time when I thought to commit suicide cause I felt like I wasn't accepted by her." Danielle recalls feeling helpless against her sister because her older sister picked on her for her skin color. She mentions that her knowledge of age difference and the power structure of skin tone made it almost impossible for her to stand up to her sister.

5.1.4: Peer Discussions on Colorism

The majority of my participants I interviewed told me that they could not recall their peers making any comments to them about their skin tone. However, even though they could not

remember a conversation about colorism with their peers, they have had experiences where strangers have made remarks about their skin tone, facial features or hair texture.

Patricia was one of the few participants that mentioned a conversation that she had with a peer, in this case her boyfriend, about colorism. Patricia mentioned that her boyfriend, who has lighter skin than her, asked about the different skin colors within her family. He would ask her questions about if she had any members of her family that were really dark or really light to guess what color their children would be. She goes on to explain, "I would prefer to have children who are lighter-skinned as well because I think society accepts people of lighter complexion more. It is not because I don't like my complexion but it is because I don't want them to face any sort of discrimination or anything." Based on the conversations that Patricia has had with her boyfriend and her own prejudices, she thinks that it is better to have light skin. She believes that there is more beauty in light skin.

5.1.5 Stereotypes of Skin Color within the Trinidadian Community

Stereotypes that my participants discussed were for both lighter and darker skin tones in the Trinidadian community. My participants talked about positive and negative associations of light and dark skin that existed in their community. Gomeka shares her thoughts on what the stereotypes of the variety of skin tones in Trinidad. She recalls her experience when she met a stranger in a taxicab who told her that she was beautiful. She remembers thinking to herself, "So I say what does that mean so dark girls are not beautiful? It makes me question myself because they say for a dark person you are beautiful. They are saying that I am beautiful it's just that I am too black. I don't define beauty based on color." In her statement she reflects on her own self-perceptions and questions about her self-worth that were brought up when the other members of her community would talk about skin color.

Lynn reflected on the stereotypes that she has heard growing up in Trinidad. Growing up with a sister who is considered "red skin" (a term that is used to describe people with extremely light skin) and one who is darker skin. She has heard both negative and positive comments of skin color in the Afro-Trinidadian community. In reference to her lighter skinned sister, Lynn has heard remarks that reflect the belief that lighter-skinned females are stuck up and have more privilege to express their opinion because their skin color is closer to white skin. Lynn expressed the stereotype:

> There is this saying in Trinidad that red women are not good women they're,
> they're just difficult to take care of. They are not submissive as a [dark] woman.
> Red woman are portrayed as strong, independent. And if you are strong and
> independent you are usually considered difficult or bitch some people would say.

She also said that really dark Afro-Trinidadians are called "Black corbeaux", which means "Black vulture". In Trinidad, Black corbeaux means that darker-skinned people are viewed as ugly and lower than other members of the community. It is also meant to reflect that they do not have access to the same things that lighter-skinned members of the community have.

Michelle, who was in her last semester at college, talks about some of the difficulty that her and other Afro-Trinidadians are facing as they look for jobs. Michelle says, "I think recently the trend is changing. People are looking at skin color when you go for certain kind of jobs. They rather to take someone that is light skin than someone who is dark skin." A number of other participants talked about the difficulty of receiving a job in Trinidad because of the color of their skin. They mentioned that usually Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians who have lighter skin tend to receive the higher paying jobs because their skin color is preferred. Participants talked about employers prefer to higher people who fit a certain aesthetic rather than their

qualifications. She mentions that darker-skinned Afro-Trinidadians and even some extremely dark Indo-Trinidadians make up the majority of the labor jobs or lower ranking jobs because they are viewed to have the least amount of qualifications because of the color of their skin.

5.2: United States Sample

The participants I interviewed in the United States all identify as either Black or African-American. The age range of my participants during the time of the interview was between 18 to 23. All of my interviewees reported witnessing or experiencing a form of colorism throughout their lifetimes. One of my participants, Cardi, did not think that she experienced colorism or experienced it to the same level as peers because she was not extremely light skin or dark skin. At the interview she says, "I don't identify with any of these questions because I do not identify as light skin or dark skin. Much of the literature is based on light skin and dark skin and with brown skin I have never had any experiences with 'oh my I am brown skin'." Cardi also stated that since she is brown skin she has never felt the full on effects of discrimination of light skinned blacks or dark skinned blacks.

Like my Trinidadian sample, I asked my participants to reflect on their perceptions of the color of their skin. Four people classified themselves as dark skin, four people classified themselves as brown skin and two people classified themselves as light skin. One of the participants that identified has brown skin said that she identifies as brown skin but she is also not sure where the cut off for brown skin and dark skin is. More details about my United States sample is included in appendix two.

5.2.1: Self Esteem and Self Image

A little more than half of my participants reported that colorism severely impact their self-esteem or self-image. However, many of them reported that colorism did have some impact

on how they viewed themselves in brief moments in time. One of my participants, Jane, reported that she is more conscious about who she dates because she doesn't want people to just date her because of the color of her skin.

> Since I am interested in darker skin men I wonder if they are attracted to me or if they are attracted to me because I am a lighter skinned female. That is something I like to mete out. I will ask them about who have they dated in the past…If he has only dated people of my skin tone I am not going to necessarily count him out or judge him for it but it is something to take note of.

Without realizing it Jane also has a colorism bias because she perceived men who are darker skinned as more attractive. Jane did not go into details about her dating preference. As someone who is light skin Jane is aware of how people view her and her skin color. As a response she takes extra precautions to ensure that people appreciate her for her personality and not for the color of her skin.

Another participant, Eva, reflects on her experiences in high school involving coming into contact with colorism as a light skin woman. During her interview, she talked about how her White friends and Black friends talked about her skin color when she was around them. Her White friends would always call her "The White girl with the nappy hair" and her Black friends would call her "light bright almost White". She recalled that her White friends never made comments about her being Black until she made the conscious decision to no longer straighten her hair. Once she made the change she noticed a change in how her White peer viewed her because she had a physical attribute that distinguished her from them. She also noticed the change in how her darker-skinned Black peers responded to her when she made the adjustments to her hair. She believed that they called her almost White because her skin was so light that if

her hair reverted to its straighter phrase then she would more closely resemble a White person. Also, she thinks this was the darker-skinned students' way of saying that they did not accept her because her skin color was more closely associated with the White students.

Marissa gave an interesting response to how she addressed her self-esteem and self-image due to colorism. She shared a story about a friend of hers who was only being pursued by a male because of the lightness of her skin. He even admitted to Marissa that her friend was not that pretty but the color of her skin made her attractive. She reports:

> I will be honest it made me feel better about myself because the only reason [he] like her is because she is light skin. I don't think she was what he was looking for because if the compliment that you could give to someone is you only like them because they are like skin but if a dark skin girl had the same face and same qualities she had and you were into dark skin girls you would pick her.

Although Marissa understands how this comment could be demeaning to her friend, she still felt happy knowing she would not be considered beautiful only because of her dark skin. If someone was to like her, then would be because of her actual beauty and not because of her skin color. In this comment, Marissa felt validated and affirmed because she believes that if someone liked her it would be because she actually looked beautiful and not because she had dark skin.

Sarah also mentions the effects that colorism had on her youth. When she was younger she did not consider herself beautiful because all the images she saw surrounding black beauty were light skin, which did not reflect her skin tone. She says, "Everyone who I thought was beautiful had medium colored skin tone or lighter skin. Every time I saw them I was like oh they are pretty but they are a special type of chocolate that makes them pretty…Rarely did I see black people in these magazines but when I did they were light skin." Sarah goes further to say that

even though she had a supportive household, it did not make her feel better about her skin tone. She still would take great measures to avoid getting darker. She would not go out in the sun unless she had to, and she would only go out if she wore sunblock. Even though she took a lot of precautionary measures she would still get darker which severely impacted how she perceived herself in her youth.

5.2.2 Feelings of Isolation

Many of my participants brought up feelings of isolation due to colorism. They did mention how at some points during their conversations with others or experiences in their life times they were uncomfortable because of the remarks that other people made about them. Moneta mentioned how her experiences with colorism made her feel isolated or made her decide to isolate herself because of what people said about her skin tone. she said, "I used to pray that I would be light skin just for a day to see if people would treat me different. I felt like they got treated better…I knew that they got treated better than me. It definitely contributed to me being shy or obsessing over beauty a lot." Even as a child, Moneta was able to reflect upon conversations that people in her family had about her because of the darkness of her skin and note that light skin was preferred in her family. These experiences that she had when she was younger affected how she interacts with other people now. She shares,

> I say I am very protective because I feel like the colorist thing is very hyperactive.
> I feel like people are judging me about being dark skin so I don't really mess
> around there with relationships with both boys and girls. I have to usher into the
> relationship because I don't know where they stand or their take on colorism. I
> don't know if that is something that they take to heart.

Moneta relates that she is hyperaware about how people view colorism and how they have viewed her in the past. Therefore, she is very cautious in relationships to avoid people making negative judgments about her because of her skin tone.

5.2.3 Family Discussions on Colorism

All of the United States participants talked about colorism being discussed in their household. Unlike the Trinidad population participants, these participants mentioned neutral or positive conversations about colorism and not just negative ones. Mikayla talks about how her mother would surround her skin color with a lot of positive reinforcement to ensure that Mikayla felt confident about herself. She says, "My mother was very big on skin color…So she worked really hard to make sure that I was comfortable in my skin tone. When I was little she would always talk about how I had very pretty brown skin." Mikayla talks about the positive reinforcements that her mother attached to her skin color in order to ensure that she thought of herself as beautiful and that she wouldn't let comments from other people influence how she viewed herself.

Moneta reflects on her experience growing up having a sister who has light skin and growing up in a family that valued light skin. She talks about the difficulties she had with body image in response to the conversations people had about her dark skin. She remembers,

> My sister used to talk about her being light skinned all the time. I don't think she did it directly or not on purpose but it used to affect me. My grandmother has an obsession. She used to talk about my sister and say that she had pretty light skin and that she could be a model. With me she will acknowledge that I am dark skin and she will say that you need to lose some weight.

She mentions that in her family light skin was valued and she recognized that she was treated differently because of her dark skin. She remembers being put down intentionally and not intentionally by family members because she did not have the ideal skin tone.

Jane talks about conversations that she has had with her mother surrounding her dating choices. Jane mentions some of the questions and bits of the conversations that she has had with her mother on this topic, "Her comments are, 'Do you have to date someone so dark? Why do you prefer darker skinned men?' I think there was a comment about dating a dark skinned man, you will have a child with a hair texture that is more difficult." Jane thinks that her mother felt this way about her dating choice because her family is mostly light skinned. However, Jane mentions that these comments about her dating choices have lessened because those are her preferences, and her mother realizes that her preferences aren't going to change based on her comments. Therefore, her mother has changed her stance on the men that Jane chooses to date.

5.2.4 Peer Discussions on Colorism

All of my American participants recounted instances of how discussions with peers have affected their opinions about colorism. In these conversations they were presented with the stereotypes of skin tone in the Black color complex and how they affected their interpretation of colorism and skin tone. Jane recounts a conversation that she had with her peers during a track practice. She talks about how people made fun of a teammate of hers because his skin tone was so dark. As a response to these comments Jane laughed like the other members of her team. However, the teammate that was insulted only lashed out at her because she was the lightest member in the vicinity that was laughing at the jokes made about his skin color. According to Jane he said, " 'Jane you better shut up with your yellow boned ass'. I thought it was rude seeing how I was not the one who said the joke. But looking back, retrospectively, I can see how me

laughing encourages –it hurt his feelings" Jane reflects on the fact that she acknowledges how her laughter was insulting and supported her teammate being picked on. She believes that her teammate singled her out because he saw her response to the situation as her using her privilege as a light skin to put him down because he was dark skin.

Moneta also reflects on her experience dealing with comments about her skin tone from her peers. She recalls being asked to sit next to other dark children on the bus so that her peers could compare and contrast their skin tones to see who was the darkest school child. She also remembers her peers comparing her to black objects to emphasize the fact that she was extremely dark skinned. Moneta reflects, "Outside the household when I was growing up I used to be compared to a Black crayon. Kids used to always say that I was darker than a black crayon." This is just one of the many examples that Moneta gives on how people viewed her and talked about her skin color outside of her home.

Anna talks about an experience that she had with her boyfriend who she was dating in high school at the time. She talks about having a conversation with her boyfriend about her family. She remembers showing him a picture of her sister who she thinks looks a lot like her. Anna reflects, "When I showed him a picture because he was just like let me see a picture of your family and I showed him individual pictures of my siblings, he said that she was the prettier one. He said 'Oh she is the prettier one even though you guys look the same' basically because her skin was lighter than mine." Anna remembers being told by her boyfriend that even though she and her sister looked alike it was because her sister has a lighter skin tone that she is considered prettier.

Marissa also shares an experience that she had with her peers on colorism. She recalls being called names and she also began to notice a change in the attitudes of people toward certain skin tones when she went to high school. She recounts,

I know at one point, this boy called me roach because I was dark skin. I mean it hurt my feelings for a little. Once I got to high school it was more clear that light skin girls were prettier than dark skin girls but no one made any direct comments to myself. I definitely think that when it came to dating they were more interesting in girls with light skin.

Marissa talks about being compared to a roach during her middle school years. Not only do roaches have a dark skin tone, they are regarded as dirty. She also recalls going to high school and noticing how the boys in her school tended to gravitate toward females with lighter skin instead of pursuing black women with all different shades.

Sevenus talks about the interactions and conversations that she has with her boyfriend on skin color. She says that her boyfriend calls her chocolate and she calls him peanut butter because together they make a Reese Peanut Butter cup. Sevenus delves further in their relationship by saying,

He reaffirms my beauty…You don't really hear in music videos artist praising black skin unless they are conscious rappers. You always hear rappers talk about red-bone and light skin women. You see them with light skin women. It is not what they say about brown skin women as much as it is what they don't say or what we don't see."

Sevenus talks about the importance of her boyfriend continuously telling her that she is beautiful because other sources that give off images of beauty is do not affirm that her skin tone and people with her skin tone have it.

5.2.5 Stereotypes of Skin Color within the United States Community

All of my interviewees talk about stereotypes of skin color. Unlike the Trinidadian population the stereotypes of skin color mostly place negative connotations of skin color on darker skin. A lot of the participants gave answers that discussed how these stereotypes of skin color affect their decisions and feelings about skin tone. Also, my participants mention how they think colorism affects both light skin and dark skin Blacks but more negative stereotypes are associated with darker-skinned Blacks. Lila is aware of the stereotypes that exist about skin tone in the Black community, and she has made conscious decisions as to whom she will date. Lila says, "I consciously don't date light skin guys because they have a stereotype of pretty, boyish, and disrespectful. So I feel like if they are too pretty they are not going to treat me right so I consciously don't date light-skinned men." In Lila's interview she talks about how her peers and social media attach a negative stigma to people with light skin. She mentions that people believe that people with light skin do not treat people who are darker then them with less respect. Therefore, Lila does not want to date a light skin because she does not want to date a man who she thinks might mistreat her.

Jane reflects on a lot of the complaints that Black people give about whitewashed Black actors or Black actors in the media. She mentions that generally Black people that are in the media have light skin because they fit in better with Eurocentric beauty norms. However, she notes that as a Black person with lighter skin it is nice to see representation of lighter Black people. Also she recognizes the privilege that she has as lighter skinned female but she also

mentions that she has to face discrimination from the Black community because her appearance is more closely associated with a white aesthetic.

Sevenus discusses the stereotype of the Strong Black Woman as a stereotype that affects Black women but more so darker-skinned woman. She believes that members within the Black community and outside the Black community think that Black woman should be able to bear it all and not show weaknesses in public. She states,

As far as colorism is concerned, the darker you are the more tightly bound to the stereotype of the Strong Black Woman. Lighter tone woman have more room to be softer and gentler, more desirable. The antithesis of a hard black woman is a soft white woman. The lighter skin you are closer to being able to explore you softer sides.

There is a belief that Black woman should be able to handle anything that is thrown at her. She further contextualizes this identity by talking about how this identity affects women with a lighter skin tone and women with a darker skin tone. Sevenus thinks that lighter-skinned women are not forced into the Strong Black Woman stereotype because they are viewed as more feminine because they are closer to a white aesthetic.

5.3: Conclusion

The focus of my study is to shed light on the narratives and experiences of the twenty Black female individuals that I interviewed. Similar to (1991) my study "encourages African American women to gather the knowledge necessary to be informed about their own personal biographies, their African American community, and how the structural institutions of racism function" (p. 221; Richardson-Stovall, 2012). My research reinforces the reflexive approach and has allowed me to act as my own agent by gathering my own knowledge of colorism. Also by

reporting my results from my interview I am able to empower the other Black women in my study by giving their own experience agency. According to Collins (1991), "by portraying African-American women as self-defined, self-reliant individuals confronting race, gender, and class oppression. Afrocentric feminist thought speaks to the importance that knowledge plays in empowering oppressed people" (p. 221). Additionally, Black feminist thought relays that new knowledge is important to implement change. By sharing the consciousness of individuals, I am cultivating awareness of colorism within the Black community and sparking dialogue of this critical issue. I am also contributing to the scholarship on feminist thought and Africana Studies by bringing the narratives of my twenty participants to the forefront of my research.

Chapter 6

Discussion

6.1: Cultural Differences.

   Russell et al (1992) and Andrew (2004) claim that all postcolonial societies have a skin tone color hierarchy that places whiteness on top. As expected, my participants all confirmed experiencing colorism and mention how colorism shaped their depiction of themselves and interactions with others. Before I completed the study, I assumed that the historical and demographic differences of Trinidad and the United States would lead to huge differences in the way my participants talked about colorism. With this idea of twice colonized presented by Khan (2004) and a slight majority Indian population, I assumed that colorism in Trinidad would be more severe than in the United States. In caste system in India acts as a social and political system that places lighter-skinned Indian on top (Khan, 2004). This system is fixed and its ideology was brought to Trinidad with the mass migration of Indian peoples in the late 19th century. In the United States there is more reflexivity in social rank. Black people generally tend to have lower ranked jobs but still have more social mobility by having higher educational levels, which lead to higher ranked occupational positions and social class (Russell et al, 1992).

   In addition to racial division in Trinidad, my Trinidadian participants all mentioned how the color issue in Trinidad stratifies the society, especially in the Black community. Williams (1944) agrees and states, "The evidence suggests clearly that the whiter the person the less formal qualifications were demanded of him in being hired into top or middle positions in private business organizations" (p. 207). Several of my participants in Trinidad mention a similar rigid caste system that puts light skinned Indians on top and darker skinned Blacks on the bottom. They also mention that it is

harder for them to get a job in comparison to their Indian counterparts. In her interview Gomeka mentions that she applied for a job at the Ministry of Education but was rejected while an Indian person who had less qualifications was hired over her.

The narrative of job discrimination is similar to job discrimination that occurs against Black women in the United States. Historically and contemporarily, there is a racial disparity in the job market and wages because of the racial discrimination and prejudice against Black people (Mandel and Semyonov, 2016). Wolf (1991) adds more to this narrative by claiming that the relationship between skin color and perceptions of attractiveness is important for women for employment. The only difference between these forms of job discrimination and racism in Trinidad and the United States is that Blacks in Trinidad face job discrimination from Indo-Trinidadians instead of Whites. Interestingly, there are very few White people that live in Trinidad. None of my participants from Trinidad mentioned experiencing any form of discrimination from Euro-Trinidadians. However, the effects of colonialism are still present in the Trinidad society even with the absence of the colonizer.

6.2: Family role in Color Consciousness

Coard et al (2001) emphasizes how identities are formed and created by family ideals, which affects the self-esteem and self-perceptions of children. Collins (2006) provides further insight by adding that family rhetoric and practices play an essential role in teaching their children about racial hierarchies and racism. As expected my participants that mentioned that they had a more positive view of their skin color if their parents affirmed their skin tone. Hunter (2004) mentions that Black people that have been negatively affected by colorism come from families who desire to align their views on light skin being preferred in women over darker skin.

Interestingly enough none of my participants from Trinidad talked about their family members affirmed their skin tone or made positive comments. My United States participants had more variations in their responses of their family's role in their color consciousness. Some talked about hearing negative comments and others talked about positive comments.

My participants from Trinidad and the United States expressed the same sentiments as Maddox and Gray (2002) on their theory of skin tone bias. All twenty of my participants illuminated that more negative stereotypes were placed on people with a darker skin tone such as: darker-skinned Blacks are not as smart, they are thugs, and are less attractive. My participants informed me that their community members, peers, and most importantly, their family members reinforce stereotypes about darker skin. Based on the stories of these women, colorism in Trinidad is very similar to colorism in the United States. Black people describe the lighter skin tone females as beautiful, privileged, intelligent, whereas the darker skinned tone females was described as unintelligent, unattractive, forgotten, undesirable, and jealous (Hunter, 2002). Hall (1995) describes this bias toward light skin as the bleaching syndrome because of the internalization of white aesthetics in the Black community.

Bond and Cash (1992) have reported, "being the 'light child' or 'dark child' may carry special significance, either favorable or unfavorable, in the context of specific family dynamics" (p. 884). As expected all of my participants who mention being the lighter-skinned sibling were conscious of the fact that they were treated better than their siblings who had darker skin. My participants who talked about being the darker-skinned sibling mention being conscious of the fact that they were treated worst in comparison to their lighter-skinned siblings. Moneta and Danielle –as darker children –mentioned constantly hearing negative comments on their skin tone as they grew up in their home environment and how that severely impacted their self-

esteem. Similarly, in the study conducted by Wilder and Cain (2011), the twenty-six females they interviewed emphasized that their families played a crucial role in their color socialization in their public lives.

6.3: Discussion of Stereotypes on Colorism

Maddox and Gray (2002) conceptualize the idea of a skin tone bias in the Black community by people behaving differently toward other people based on the lightness or darkness of their skin. The racial caste system created by slavery gave preference to slaves whose skin and other bodily characteristics were closer to White. This system was internalized and perpetuated in the Black community cross generationally. Black observers associate light skin tone with positive traits and dark skin tone with negative traits, similar to their White counterparts (Maddox and Gray, 2002).

In my research, my participants confirmed these biases. However, from the participants I learned about negative stereotypes of lighter skin. My participants who identified as lighter skin divulge that colorism is something affects both lighter-skinned people and darker-skinned people. Webb (2013) supports this narrative and insists that the only way Black people can truly heal from colorism is to acknowledge that no one goes untouched by colorism. Webb (2013) says that one way lighter-skinned women are affected by colorism is that they have their race or ethnicity questioned constantly. Eva talks about being called the White girl with nappy hair by her White peers and being called light bright almost White by her Black peers. These comments served as constant reminder that because she has light skin she was not accepted by either race. Each racial groups selected physical characteristics of Eva that did not stereotypically belong to their respective race to emphasize that she stood out. My Trinidadian participants talked about red skin being a marker of promiscuity, stubbornness, and moody. One participant, Susan,

mentioned a saying that Trinidadians have about women with red skin. She says, "Red woman are no better than a dollar bill". This demonstrates that they are cheap, worthless and causes trouble. Cunningham (1997) delves further into how lighter-skinned women are affected by colorism by adding that many light skin Blacks are hyper-aware of their privilege and they feel guilt and shame for their freedoms. Many of my participants talked about lighter-skinned women not being tied as closely with societal constructs of Black women as a whole. They believe that lighter skin women have more independence and privilege to move in between spaces. Additionally, my participants noted that they were constantly reminded of their light skinned privilege in their families and their peer groups. Many of them reported that other people would justify their behaviors that related to not understanding issues that affect Black people, more so darker-skinned Blacks, because they have light skin.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

From my participants' responses, I have concluded that colorism is a complex system of inequality that has been internalized as a result of the racial skin hierarchy put in place by slavery in the Americas. My participants express that complexities of colorism has been passed down in the Black community from generation to generation and are reinforced by the societies that they live in. Through this study I was able to understand the reflexivity of skin color and gain insight into how my participants shaped their own image from their environments and other peoples perceptions of their identities based off their skin color. Many of my participants mention that before the interview did not have opportunities to discuss colorism and share their own personal experiences. Especially in Trinidad, my participants were not familiar with the actually term colorism but understood how the ideology perpetuated in their society and societies affected by colonization. Learning that there was not a lot of literature of colorism in Trinidad, I hope my research will add to and encourage future scholarship of colorism in Trinidad.

My research is representative of the scholarship that I found on how colorism operates in the Black community. My participants all mention how their internalized views and interpretations of colorism played a crucial role in how they interacted and viewed other members of the community. Several scholars note that members in the Black community attribute different meanings to skin color in the Black community based of their own personal experience (Hunter, 2002; Maddox and Gray, 2002; Viren, 2013). Furthermore, familial influences played an essential role as to how my participants understood their identities in relation to their skin color as well as how they understood skin color in general (Coard et al., 2001; Collins, 2006; Hunter, 2004).

Critical race theory posits race as the center to the everyday experience of Blacks and people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Bernal (2002) adds that "[Black students] are holders and creators of knowledge, they often feel as if their histories, experiences, culture, and language are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal education settings" (p.106). Reflecting back on my own personal experiences with colorism and the experiences of the participants that I interviewed, my research contributed to Africana Studies and Feminist thought by bringing my own personal story alongside the narratives provided by my participants to the forefront of my research. The main goal of my research was to position my participants as social agents to offer insight into understanding and exploring the complex social phenomena's in their lives (Jenkins, 2009). By affirming my participants' narratives as important contributions to the scholarship of colorism, I provide them with not only a voice but also representation in the scholarship of colorism, and by extension the Black experience.

7.1: Further Directions

7.1.1: Hair Politics

Although hair texture was not a focus on mine for this project many of all of my participants discuss discrimination in their community because of their hair texture. Although hair texture was not a primary focus of my research project all of my participants talk about discrimination that they faced in their communities because of their hair choice. During her interview Anna reflects, "Outside of wanted lighter skin I always wanted my hair to be long, hair that I could do anything to…These are features of a white or lighter skin person that is more socially accepted". Along with light skin the media portrays White women with straight hair as the beauty norm. If Black women are portrayed in the media they generally have light skin, looser curl pattern and Eurocentric facial structure (Sekayi, 2003; White 2005). Instead of these

images of Black women diversifying the media, they only reinforce the Eurocentric beauty norms (Griffin 2011; White, 2005). In addition, Thompson (2009) adds that advertisements directed toward Black people on hair care encourage Black women to relax their hair, which damages the hair and burns the scalp. Many of my participants from both Trinidad and the United States talk about how they have faced job discrimination because their hair texture or hairstyle was not considered appropriate for the workplace. Many of my participants beside Anna, talk about the desire to learn more about taking care of natural hair and embracing all different types of Black hair besides loose curls and straight hair. If I am able to continue this study in the future I would explore how these women face discrimination because of their hair and also learn more about the politics surrounding Black hair in the work place.

7.1.2: The Call for Curriculum

All of my participants in the interview discussed that they believed that some form of colorism would benefit the Black community and other members of society about the issues and effects of colorism. The participants that reported struggling with colorism at some point in their lives were able to develop a more positive self-image through learning more about Black people and race in the classroom. Although it was not a primary aim of mine, to ensure that my research participants desire to have their experiences reflected in curriculum, I included curricular-based discussions of colorism that can be used in classroom setting. The curriculum approaches that I found came from American researchers. Taking in to account that these approaches would not function in the same way in Trinidad because of the cultural differences, I provide a quick overview of these models. Therefore, my participants or other scholars choose to use these models they can be amended to their needs. I have attached my curriculum suggests in appendix three and four of my paper.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions

1. Growing up in your household, has anyone made a comment on your skin tone? If so what was it and how did it make you feel?

2. Can you talk about a time when a peer has made a comment about your skin tone? How did you feel?

3. What do you want people to learn about your skin tone?

4. Do you think colorism is affecting your daily life (i.e. dating, friendships, relationships to teachers, how you are being perceived in the classroom)?

5. Can you think of an incident at the [insert participant's university] where you or someone you know faced explicit discrimination based on their skin tone?

6. Has anyone defined your beauty solely on your skin color? How did it make you feel?

7. Can you think of a time that you were complimented for your skin color?

8. What would you describe skin your tone as?

9. Do you think class curriculum or discussions can help address this issue on campus? What would like to be addressed in these types of discussions?

Appendix 2: Participant Composite

Pseudonym	Age*	Ethnicity*	Perceived skin color*	My perception*	Things noted in the interview
Amber	21	Afro-Trinidadian	Dark skin	Dark skin	I do not think that the participant fully understood what colorism meant. She mostly talked about racism between Afro-Trinidadians and Indians.
Nicole	20	Afro-Trinidadian	Brown Skin	Brown Skin	She commented that her faith helped her embrace her own skin color and beauty because she believes that God made everyone unique.
Michelle	20	Afro-Trinidadian	Brown Skin	Dark Skin	She said that she is happy with her skin tone but she wishes that she had straighter hair
Susan	19	Afro-Trinidadian	Dark Skin	Dark skin	She mentions that in Trinidad colorism and racism affect that educational system. The majority of the people that are able to go to college and succeed are Indo-Trinidadian and or lighter-skinned Afro-Trinidadians.
Lynn	25	Afro-Trinidadian	Light Skin	Light Skin	In the interview she described herself as someone who has a lighter skin tone. However, she also referred to herself as someone who is not to light or to dark.
Danielle	22	Afro-Trinidadian	Dark Skin	Dark Skin	My participant mentions how her higher educational level positively impacted how her family and community perceived her regardless of her dark skin color.
Taylor	23	Afro-Trinidadian	Dark Skin	Dark Skin	She felt comfortable in her skin tone because everyone in her family and community are around the same skin tone. Therefore, her skin color was always reaffirmed
Sheryl	21	Afro-Trinidadian	Brown Skin	Light Skin	Since her parents are really dark people did not think that she was her child. Therefore, she advocated associating her skin color with brown skin tones to demonstrate that she was related to her parents.

Gomeka	18	Afro-Trinidadian	Brown Skin	Dark Skin	Her mother made comments about her having dark skin growing up. She associates her skin color with a brown skin tone because she knows her mother prefers lighter skin.
Patricia	25	Afro-Trinidadian	Dark Skin	Dark Skin	She wants to marry someone who is light-skinned because she wants her children to be beautiful.
Moneta	21	African-American	Dark Skin	Dark Skin	Growing up she received negative comments from her family and peers about her dark skin. Therefore, she would pray that she could be light skin so that people would treat her better.
Sarah	20	African-American	Dark Skin	Dark Skin	She believes that people talk about other people's skin tone because the are self conscious about their own. She believes that people who talk about people's skin tone were probably picked on their skin tone when they were younger.
Lila	21	African-American	Brown Skin	Brown Skin	When she was younger Lila was always compared to her best friend. People thought Lila's best friend was prettier than her because she had a lighter skin tone.
Eva	18	African-American	Light Skin	Light Skin	She mentions her grandmother and mother not getting long because her mother does not believe that there is anything wrong with her having darker skin.
Anna	20	African-American	Brown Skin	Light skin	She had a boyfriend that said that her sister was prettier than her because she had lighter skin even though they look almost identical.
Marissa	21	African-American	Dark Skin	Dark Skin	Marrissa mentions witnessing people who have lighter-skin being considered more beautiful solely because of the color of their skin and not because of other physical attributes or personality.
Jane	23	African-American	Light Skin	Light skin	Her mother was not particularly happy that she was dating someone that was dark skin. Her mother prefers that the people that she dated were brown skin or light skin.

Sevenus	22	African-American	Dark skin	Dark Skin	Her mother was much lighter than her so when she was younger she used to ask her mother if she was adopted. She did not believe that she was her mothers child because of the skin color difference between them.
Michelle	22	African-American	Brown skin (Not aware of where the cut off is)	Dark Skin	When she was dating a guy in high school he was happy that she beautiful and smart even though she was dark-skinned. So she dumped him.
Cardi	21	African-American	Brown Skin	Light Skin	She said that since she was neither dark skin or light skin, she believed she was excluded from these discussions because she is not either one of two extremes

*Age at the time of the interview

*All of my Afro-Trinidadian participants identified either Black or Afro-Trinidadian. My African-American participants also identified as either Black of African-American.

*I allowed my participants to self-identify as brown skin, light skin or dark skin.

*Since this is a reflexive study, I decided to describe my participants skin color. This is solely my perception and is not support by any literature. Since I believe there is a lot of reflexivity in skin color, I classified by participants by my own skin tone. If they were significantly lighter than me I thought they were light skin. If they were around my skin color I thought they were brown skin. If they were significantly darker than me I thought they were dark skin.

Appendix 3: Busey Model

Busey (2014) feels that the issue on bullying can be addressed by educators giving their students surveys on intra-racial discrimination to gather information on what is each student's background and experience with this form of discrimination. I think this would be a good model for a classroom setting because the teacher will be able to gather information on the students and learn what aspect of colorism needs to be addressed for the students in their class.

Busey (2014) presents several teaching activities to initiate conversations on the topic. The students that were in her class were primarily Black students and other students of color. Busey (2014) opens her lesson with the survey because "it gives students the opportunity to reflect on the topic, and to question their experiences, which helps to create relevance and meaning for them" (p 123). The Intraracial Discrimination Survey presented by Busey (2014) contains ten questions that students can answer that focus on how these students were discriminated against. The questions are structured so the participants circle "yes" or "no" to each statement and provide an explanation for each response. The Intraracial Discrimination Survey is an excellent opening survey to create dialogue on colorism by requiring students to include their input early in these discussions in colorism.

Another activity that Busey (2014) suggests is for students to take an Attractiveness and Intelligence Survey. This survey has students view ten faces of different African Americans with different skin tones to learn what stereotypes each student had of the faces. Not only will the teachers know background information about each child in the class, they also will be able to have open discussions in class about their experiences with colorism so that they students who are bullying the others can empathize with the students who they are bullying.

Loewen (1991) suggests that one of the most effective ways to teach about ethnicity, race, and race relations in the social studies is to use film and television. For Busey's (2014) last curriculum suggestion she creates a media bias chart. For this exercise, students watch different television sources to understand how Blacks are "portrayed in these shows as well as how they interact with one another based on skin complexion, social class, academic achievement, or physical features" (Busey, 2014, 128). Ochoa-Becker (2007) suggests that the material for those discussions would require a more authentic assessment such as reflections and group discussions to allow students to have a wider breadth of knowledge and concepts of what is being discussed.

Appendix 4: Brooks, Browne, and Hampton Model

Golden (2004) argues that the narratives of skin tone stratification in Black families are widespread in novels and fictional and autobiographical accounts. Discussing books on colorism will provide literary context to the experiences that many of these women feelings and represent the experiences that these women have had. The curriculum example provided from Brooks et al (2008) is an afterschool book club created by educators to enhance critical thinking skills in adolescent girls on race and gender. The focus of this club is to do a close reading of novels and other works of literature so these girls discuss literature that is reflective of them and their experiences as black girls dealing with racism and intra-racial discrimination (Brooks et al, 2008). I do not plan to replicate a book club but I plan to use the theoretical framework presented by Brooks et al (2008) to have meaningful discussions on colorism at the university level. With this focus, negative depictions of black women as mammies, hot mommas, or matriarchs as well as other controlling images with be challenged and discredited by educators facilitating discussions on race and gender (Collins, 2000). The literature that will be used in these conversations will be a counter agent to the negative self-images and promote self -esteem among its readers (Bishop, 2007)

The literature presented to these students should be representative of the experiences that these females have had so they can see themselves reflected in the literature. Educational practitioners who teach this curriculum should be cognizant of the literature that they choose by selecting contemporary novels as well as historical novels (Brooks et al, 2008) to convey to the students that the reality of Black females and colorism is well documented and they are not alone in their experience. I hope that these reading will spark discussions that include writing activities and reflections. In this approach, educators can create interpretive strategies to synthesize ideas

from the text with the students' personal experiences, knowledge, and identity (Brooks et al, 2008). Like the Brooks et al (2008) model, quotes from the literature where gender, beauty, and race intersect will be presented as part of classroom discussions. Some of the questions that Brooks et al (2008) suggest that should be included in these discussions were

1. How does the novel portray colorism from an African American female point of view?

2. What do your responses to the metanarrative of colorism suggest about how they identified with the story? (680)

These questions will ask students to make connections with the literature from their own personal point of view and the point of view of the Black characters of the book making the literature more relatable and enjoyable to digest in a multicultural classroom (Knight and Marciano, 2013).

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