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Colorism and hair text bias

Stacy Ghansah

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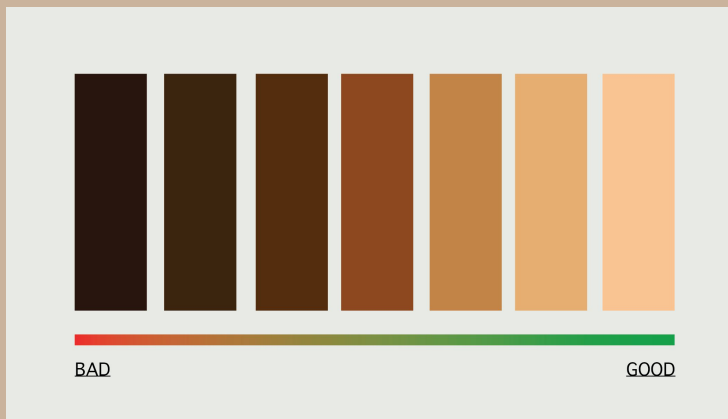
Colorism and Hair Texture Bias

By: Stacy Ghansah



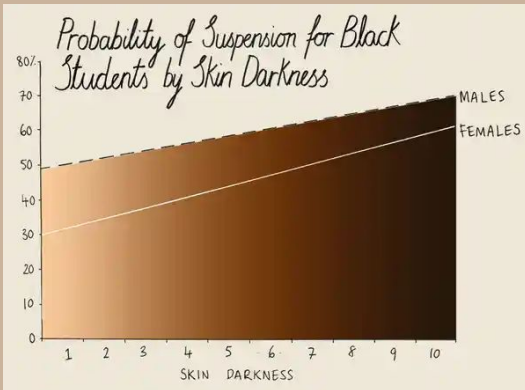
Colorism: The definition

Colorism is extremely common in a lot of communities of color. “Colorism is the practice of discrimination by which those with lighter skin are treated more favorably than those with darker skin.”(n.a) Colorism is a huge product of racism in the United States, it has been use to uphold superiority within white beauty standards. Colorism is perpetuated in the media, in law, and in everyday lives.



Light Skin Privilege

Light Skin Privilege is a product of colorism, it stems from slavery. “Slaves with lighter skin are assigned domestic tasks while slaves with darker skin were forced to work outside in the fields, doing much more grueling tasks. Lighter-skinned slaves were favored because they were often the product of a slave owner raping a slave, thus creating a lighter-skinned child.” (n.a) Light skin privilege also stems from lighter skin having a proximity to a white beauty standard. This association creates a “superiority”.



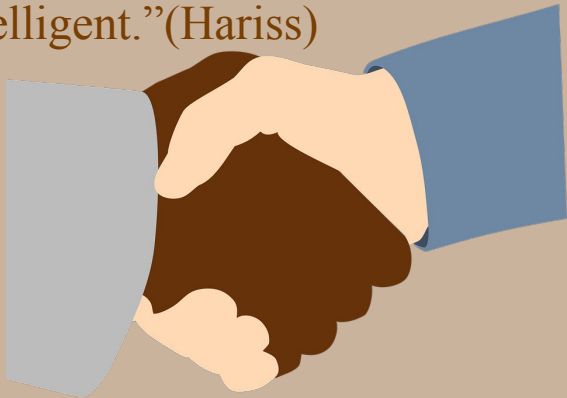
The Paper Bag Test

The paper bag test was a way to establish superiority and light-skin privilege. “In the 19th and 20th century, the "paper bag test" was often utilized in black spaces and in hiring of black people.”(n.a) The paper bag test was used a method to admit or allow black people to do things. You were not allowed in certain spaces, or even considered for hire if you were darker than a Paper Bag.



Hiring Practices

As well as the Paper Bag test, your color determined whether or not you can get a job. In the Mid-20th century, “tone was often the most important factor in applying for work as a person of color in the mid-20th century.”(n.a) More recently a study was conducted and it was found that, “ 223 African-American and Hispanic subjects who were interviewed by white interviewers, he found that African Americans and Latinos who were deemed to have lighter skin tones were also significantly more likely to be seen as intelligent.”(Hariss)



Crazy Rich Asians

Crazy Rich Asians is a 2018 romantic comedy directed by Jon M Chu, based off of the book “Crazy Rich Asians”. It was very popular during this time as it was a movie that positively displayed asian culture to an American Audience. But unfortunately, “In that same year, “Crazy Rich Asians,” celebrated for putting Asian-Americans front and center, faced criticism for featuring a fully light-skinned cast”(Piñero)



Black-ish

Black-ish is an ABC show written by Kenya Morris. The show, discusses race and issues in the black community in the form of a sitcom. One episode that caught a lot of attention was the colorism episode. In this episode, the parents of a darkskin girl find that skin lightening was used on their daughters school photo. This episode unveils a “discussion about colourism, addressing the stereotypes that often come with being light-skin, like the idea that light-skin men are ‘soft,’ as well as the discrimination that both dark-skin and light-skin Black people deal with.”(Daniel)



Indian Matchmaking

Indian Matchmaking is a show on Netflix, this show features single men and women and a marriage counselor Sima Taparia. This show matches couples together based on a list of needs and interests. Indian Matchmaking reveals the sad truth about colorism in indian culture. The show ‘Mentioned casually but frequently throughout the eight episodes is the idea that candidates should be "fair," or in other words, have light skin.’ (Sangal)



Bridgerton

Bridgerton is a new Netflix series that just became popular this past month. Bridgerton, directed by Shonda Rhimes is a romantic period drama. That has a classic storyline of love. This show has been praised not just because of the context, but because of the diversity. Although critics have noticed the kind of diversity as questionable. Viewers have noticed, “The show’s two darkest male characters are either the Duke of Hastings, a father anyone would hate, or Will (Martins Imhangbe), a boxer whose only purpose was to serve as Simon’s unpaid therapist.” (Hinds)



Black Panther

Black Panther was a very popular movie in 2018. It was a very monumental moment for the film history as it was one of the first movies that showcased black and african culture in a positive light, not only that but the movie had roles that empowered women. Black panther was praised for having “Dark-skinned and brown-skinned black women abundant in the movie. You can see it in the background characters, the promotional material and in the much-talked-about Dora Milaje — an elite team of female bodyguards that defer to our good King T’Challa, played by Chadwick Boseman. And every single significant speaking role has been cast with a dark-skinned or brown-skinned actress.”



Instagram Filters

Social media has been a way to share content to millions of people. Unfortunately over the years apps like instagram have been a way to measure validation with likes, followers, and comments. Colorism has been brought to light because of the lack of validation towards the darkskin community. Specifically with filters, During an experiment “When asked M what she thought her filtered image, she replied, "Ew. This is completely white-washed. The colors of my lipstick and dress are very muted, and I look entirely too bright. If someone didn't know me, they could mistake me for being much more fair skinned than I am. I don't like it.” (Jerkins)



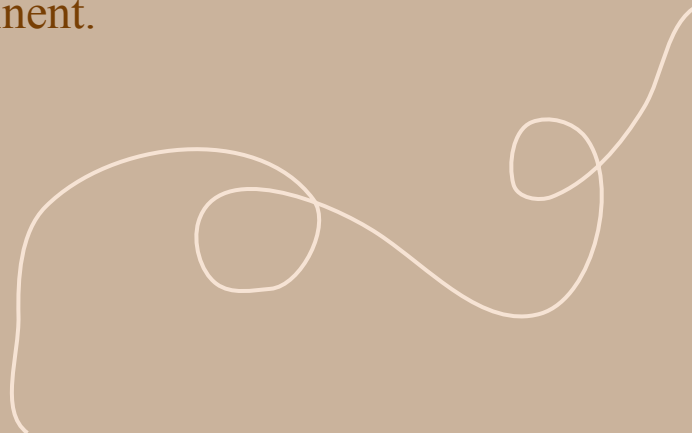
Before Filter



After Filter

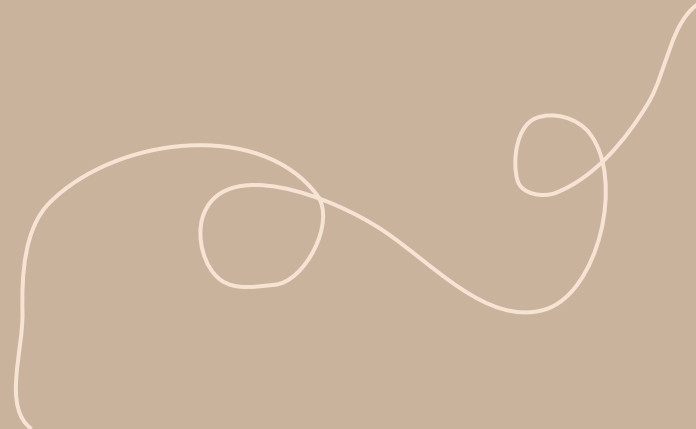
Good Hair/ Relaxer

Throughout the past centuries people have used the term “good” and “bad” hair to differentiate what hair people may or may not be appealed to. This term is often used in black communities when used to describe hair texture and the appearance of ones hair. Chris Rock’s documentary, *Good Hair*, “: Rock says he did the film because his daughter came to him one day, upset, that she didn’t have “good hair.”” This goes to show how the perception of kinky or tighter curls is considered having “bad” hair has grown over the centuries and how getting a relaxer has become more prominent.



Unprofessional hair

When a google search of unprofessional hair is done, it is found that a lot of images with black women's natural hair shows up. This shows a bias, not with google but with all internet sources. Google gets these photos from websites these“ Images seems to have taken many of the pictures of black women wearing the “unprofessional” hairstyles were from blogs, articles and Pinterest boards.” (Alexander)



Black Fishing

A term coined by journalist Wanna Thompson Black Fishing occurs when non-black people pretend to be black by altering their appearances using tanning products, darker complexion products, and by wearing hairstyles that are designed specifically for black hair. This occurs as a result of racial fetishization or wanting social advancement/acceptance within the black community. (Washington-Harmon)

Many celebrities/ public-figures have been found guilty of participating in blackfishing including Rita Ora, Dani Leigh, Rachel Dolezal and more



Jamaica

Colorism has become apart of world wide culture. In specific, countries like Jamaica it has really been normalized. This is because of the long history of mixed or “mulatto” slaves. Being lighter skin has been seen as the norm, anything out of that is looked at as less than. Colorism has affected social class, discrimination, etc. According to this article based on a native jamaican, “Cooper doesn't remember making a conscious choice to bleach her skin. Growing up, everyone around her was doing it—her school friends, her mom, her aunt. So she did it too. For nine years, she rubbed creams on her face and body, covering up with tights and long sleeves that she believed would make the bleach work better.”(Kebede)



Nigeria

Colorism has been an ongoing issue in countries such as Nigeria. It is one that is often overlooked because of its Normalization. Race is not an issue in countries like Nigeria because of the difference in population, but discrimination in the form of Colorism is very prevalent. In Nigeria, “there seems to be a preference for people of a lighter skin color than those that are darker and it is all around us; music videos, movies e.t.c” (Opemipo)



Bleaching Products

Skin lightening products have been prominent in the black community for centuries. “bleaching creams, whiteners, skin brighteners, or fading creams -- work by reducing a pigment called melanin in the **skin**. “ These products show the significance of colorism because it shows how people will take risks to please society or make themselves happier



China

Colorism and texture bias goes beyond one race or community. In china, people of lighter tone are often the ones who get more compliments, opportunities, and more. An article by Rae Chen states “Pale skin was seen in ancient China as a signifier of being able to stay indoors during the daytime rather than being outside working, and a pale complexion became synonymous with nobility and wealth in Chinese culture.” (Chen)



Discrimination within the Black Community

One of the ways that colorism and racism has grown over the years is Discrimination WITHIN the Black Community. An recent article by Kaitlyn Greenidge states “Colorism – the prejudice based on skin tone, usually with a marked preference for lighter-skinned people – was something I read about in novels.” she expresses how within her family everyone was loved but as soon as she got to the real world she realized that not everyone is gonna love you for you. This is a perfect example of discrimination in the black community because it shows how different people get favoritized just because of their skin shade or hair texture.



Presenting Goals/ Plan

My goal was to add an activity but I thought that this may have been the first time these students may be introduced to this topic.

I didn't want to over stimulate the students with a activity that may made them feel uncomfortable (since this is a touchy topic).

So I decided to make a lecture style presentation that could get students thinking and learning. It was just important to me that I gave the students many opportunities throughout the presentation to express their thoughts and questions.

Post Presenting

During Class, I tried making it more discussion based but, it was hard because not everyone knew much about the topic.

It was a lecture based presentation, and as much as I tried to get the students involved I think it was fine at being a lecture.

- Even though it was hard to read the class I believe that most of the students just didn't know enough about the topic to say anything.
- A few people talked but you could tell that they were trying to contribute to the lesson making sure they didn't say anything offensive.
- Throughout the lecture I asked the students for their opinion, and if they had questions. There was only two people actively talking but it still made the message much more effective especially because one of the girls talked about something she witnessed.

How This Relates to First Year Students

This presentation was important for first year students because it gives them more perspective. Being at a PWI, you don't really have many classes that highlight the cultural differences on campus and how important it is to be educated on the challenges different communities face.

My goal is that every student walking out of that classroom had more knowledge and are able to educate others.

These First year students are all looking to be inclusive teachers so I thought it was great that they were able to start imagining how many other topics they can start researching and educating themselves on to make sure that as teachers they know about the struggles and cultures differences their students may face one day.

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