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# WHAT ARE THE FACTORS OF COLORISM AMONGST AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN; AND HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE LIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN?

Iris Sumo  
005789806@coyote.csusb.edu

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Iris Petra Sumo  
June 2019

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Approved by:

Dr. Laurel Brown, Faculty Supervisor, Social Work

Dr. Janet Chang, M.S.W. Research Coordinator

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## ABSTRACT

Colorism has created a significant divide within the African American community. There is a structured hierarchy where based on the color of one's skin tone, an individual can be viewed as a higher or lower class. This qualitative study's purpose was to examine what the factors of colorism among African American Women and how this has affected their lives. A total of ten African American women of various skin tones volunteered to participate in a 30-45-minute face to face interview. Findings of this interview show that many of the woman have encountered stereotypes based on their skin tone. Many themes became apparent from the responses questions which were asked. Participants who have refer to themselves as "dark skinned" state that they are aware in society "light or brown skinned" women are more favored. Women who consider themselves "light skinned" have noticed the impact of colorism when their dark-skinned friends are constantly overlooked within the social setting. 6 of the 10 women interviewed feel as though men are the cause of the greater divide between light and dark-skinned women. Each participant interviewed acknowledged the social structure which accepts dark skin woman as being held to a lower standard or "at the bottom of the totem pole". It is the hopes of this researcher that based on this study, Social Service professionals will gain a better understanding of their African American female clients as well as a development of interventions that can reduce the harmful effects of colorism.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## DEDICATION

It has been a pleasure to complete this project. I dedicate this project to African American women all over the world. A special thank you to the participants for your speaking your truth, wanting to make a change, your patience and words of support.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

Chapter one conveys the research focus of the study which questions: What Are the Factors of Colorism Among African American Women and How Does Colorism Affect the Lives of African American Women. The paradigm used for this study is Post-Positivism, the reasoning behind doing is explained. Literature Review is displayed in chapter one as well as the theoretical orientation. The chapter will end with the discussion of the contribution this study will have on micro and macro practice.

#### Research Focus

The focus of this research is to inquire about the factors and impacts of colorism among African American women of various skin tones. Hill (2002) describes colorism as a skin-color bias which became apparent during slavery and racial oppression. According to Wilder (2010), colorism was developed to create a division within the African American community as well as an internalized structure of hierarchy. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was not uncommon to see tests which would support the internalized racism and division. The tests included the brown-paper-bag test, which meant it was preferred for people to be

the shade of the bag and not a shade darker. People used objects such as pencils, rulers or doors to administrate the tests which created social club among skin tones (Wilder p.186, 2010).

The Association of Black Psychologists on Dark Girls defines colorism as a type of oppression that is present amongst racial groups of the same skin color (ABA,2013). Those who have a lighter skin tone are considered to be more acceptable than those of a darker complexion. “To justify racial slavery, slave-holding interests 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 p.77, 2002). As colorism continues to grow within the African American community, the history behind the term is significant. McGee (2016) states that colorism began as early as 1679, 60 years after the first Africans arrived in the United States for slavery. Americans created race categories and the white race was developed in order to gain social control. As Africans were enslaved, slave owners were known to rape the women which in return produced lighter completion babies (Beck,2016).

Often, light skin slaves were seen as family members and were privileged. Lighter completed slaves were allowed to work in the house while dark skin slaves were placed out in the fields for work. Social control was a way to put family members against each other due to the difference in skin tones. “In the early 20th century, African Americans used the “brown paper bag test,”

referencing a practice of certain Black sororities and fraternities who would ban any Black person whose skin tone was darker than a paper bag” (Kerr, 2006, p. xi). “The notion of light-skinned superiority increasingly became commonplace wisdom, reflected in sayings such as, “If you’re black, get back. If you’re brown, stick around. If you’re light, you’re alright” (McGee, Alvarez, & Milner, 2016).

Colorism is typically seen and demonstrated amongst the same raced group and commonly seen among the African American community, although displayed with all individuals of color (Beck, 2016). The discussion regarding colorism and its initial impact specifically on the lives of African American women is a conversation that is extremely important to discuss due to the form of social capital. Social Capital is defined as the network of relationships of those who are among the same society. For African American women there is a disconnect between light-skinned and dark-skinned women. This is exhibited in an interview conducted by Hunter (2007), with a dark-skinned women who states her experience with light-skinned women as feeling the need to ignore, avoid and punish a light-skinned women based off the thought that fair skin women believe they’re better than those who are darker. “This social capital can be transformed into other forms of capital and used to gain status in jobs, housing, schools, and social networks” (Hunter, 2007).

Colorism is viewed as a constant problem for dark-skinned people of color, however people with lighter skin experience their own perspective of racism. For dark-skinned people of color, colorism leaves them underprivileged in

education, lacking job employment, unstable housing and woman often find trouble in marriage. Light-skinned people of color often find themselves having to prove themselves to the African American culture (Hunter, 2007). “It is important to clarify that the disadvantages of dark skin still far outweigh the disadvantages of light” (Hunter, 2007).

Who taught you to hate the texture of your hair? Who taught you to hate the color of your skin to such extent that you bleach to get like the white man? Who taught you to hate the shape of your nose and the shape of your lips? Who taught you to hate yourself from the top of your head to the soles of your feet? Who taught you to hate your own kind? Who taught you to hate the race that you belong to so much so that you don't want to be around each other ... you should ask yourself who taught you to hate being what God gave you? Bihibindi News (2016, June 28)

The research question is: What Are the Factors of Colorism Amongst African American Women and How Does This Affect the Lives of African American Women? In asking this research question, the researcher hopes to shed awareness to this topic by using the perspective of African American Women as they are interviewed.

## Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

This research study has been conducted using the Post-Positivist paradigm. The Post-Positivist paradigm calls for the researcher to be open-minded when observing and receiving feedback from players of the study. “The post positivist takes an inductive exploratory approach to understanding an objective reality” (Morris, 2013). Using the post positivist approach enabled the researcher to begin with the problem focus and allows the study to continue and develop information as well as an understanding. The post positivist approach gathers qualitative data in a naturalistic setting where individuals are living out the focus of the study. Interviewing African American women regarding their experience, thoughts, feelings of colorism and the effects this issue has had on their lives allows the researcher to view the problem focus from the perspective of the participants. Information on the research focus is gathered through literature review, observations, and personal experience of participants in hopes of bringing the focus to uncover common themes. Qualitative data gathered from the study will be used to assist clinicians with working with female African American clients as well as introduce the possibility of interventions. Using the paradigm post positivism, allowed the researcher to take a step back and observe the full picture of research questions and data collected.

## Literature Review

This literature review begins with a focus on colorism among African American women, next will discuss beauty standards and social outcomes of colorism concludes the discussion.

### Colorism in African American Women

It is important to note, Colorism is an intra-racial system that hold biases based upon an individual's hair texture, facial features or skin color. There is a higher privilege given to those who match the similar features of the white race. This is a form of discrimination between African American women. Wilder, JeffriAnne, & Colleen (2011) discusses multiple stories by woman of all shades of brown discussing the phrases they heard from the women in their families as they grew older. It was discovered that most African American women have learned to associate dark skin as a negative quality to have from their grandmothers, mothers and other female family members. Karina, a participant of the Wilder, et al., focus conversation group described her upbringing as having numerous competitors in her family who had competitions on who was considered the prettiest, who had the lighter child, or who had the better hair in their family. "Despite the fact that some women were completely unaware of the impact of female family members on their views on skin color, there were quite a few participants who readily identified experiences with their mothers as having the most influence over their identity, ability, and relationship choices" (Wilder, et

al., 2011). During this study, it was discovered that some mothers who had two daughters, one light skin and the other dark, the mother would show favoritism towards the lighter complexed daughter. Other mothers would use products to lighten the color of their daughters faces.

Landor (2013), describes how colorism has had a significant impact on African American households and how dark-skinned children were treated with less compassion than in comparison with their lighter-skinned sibling or relative. A study was conducted in 2013 that explored the impact skin tone has had on the way children are treated in an African American household. This study consisted of over 800 African American families located in Georgia and Iowa. The study measured skin tones, quality of parenting, racial discrimination and racial socialization. For the purpose of this specific research proposal, the focus will remain on the quality of parenting regarding light-skinned and dark-skinned children of African American parents. Results of this study displayed a higher quality of parenting from females who were considered lighter-skinned (Landor A, 2013). "Society often places high values on beauty in which white beauty is the standard. Thus, beauty— as defined by lighter skin—becomes a form of social capital for African American females. Our findings provide evidence that parents may have internalized this *gendered colorism* and as a result, either consciously or unconsciously, display higher quality of parenting to their lighter skin daughters and darker skin sons" (Landor A, 2013).

This shows the impact colorism has on African American women and how it continues the pattern as these women have young African American daughters of their own. It is very important to note the powerful influences that mothers have on their children. Parents shape the way their child views themselves, how they interact with others.

### Beauty Standard

Beauty in the African American community is very important, specifically pertaining to African American women. African Americans pay close attention to their hair texture, skin color as well as facial features in order to determine the beauty scale. The main emphasis should be placed on skin color as depending on what skin color you are, this can affect social acceptance, self-confidence, goals achieved, education or employment options. Thomas, Hacker & Hoxha (2011), discusses the issue of young African American women wanting to find acceptance by others and is shown through their common practices. “applying perms to hair so that it is straighter or removing dreadlocks, may impede the development of healthy self-esteem for girls and young women as they confront European standards of beauty (Abdullah 1998; Greene et al. 2000). How can Black be beautiful if it is not perceived as that by the larger society?” (Thomas, , Hacker, , & Hoxha ,2011). Data was gathered by putting together a focus group that asked young African American women “What does it mean to be an African American woman”. One participant described a situation where her older sister

decided to cut her dreadlocks due to ridicule of how nappy her hair was by classmates. The participant mentioned that because her sister cut her hair off, she decided to dye her hair and add natural highlights. She changed her appearance to be accepted by her peers.

Many participants from the Thomas et al., (2011) focus group described the standard of beauty to be that of a white women or European standards. Those who have a darker skin color have been noted to have a significant amount of lower self-esteem and disadvantages to the resources around them. Matthews (2015), describes her findings as depending on the shade of the skin, pushing towards lighter being the preferred color, lightness will grant an African Woman higher personal self-esteem in addition to a high ranking in social capital. “A woman's social relationships (i.e., social ties or social network) can additionally affect how many and how advantageous her resources are to other outlets (such as employment and/or education) (Matthews & Johnson, 2015).

As women are judged excessively by their physical appearance, those considered to possess more beauty will have better chances when encountering the social world. Bias preferences for skin color can lead equally qualifying women to dramatically different life outcomes” (Mathews & Johnson, 2015). If an African American woman has a lighter skin complexion, she is a more desirable person and a sign of beauty.

## Social Outcomes

There have been numerous studies conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between discrimination and symptoms of depression among African American women. Keith, Lincoln, Taylor and Jackson (2010) describes their findings as experiences of being unfairly treated and discrimination among African American women have a strong connection to the emotional distress. Researchers also disclosed this issue is salient among African American women because they not only experience intra-racism but also sexism. "Being treated with less courtesy, insulted or called names, and receiving poorer service on a persistent basis are psychologically burdensome to African American women" (Keith, Lincoln, Taylor, & Jackson, 2010). African American women experience both the strain of discrimination both on an interpersonal and structural level. On a structural level, African American women are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy system, they are placed in poor communities, have low socioeconomic status and are constantly approached with different problems that contribute to their emotional stability. Many of the scholars agree that African American women are being treated differently based on the color of their skin. In result of this, it has created negative self-behaviors and dangerous self-devastating and destructive mentalities. "African-American women are in a constant battle with society and self" (Mathews & Johnson, 2015).

Colorism is a form of racism within the African American community that has been passed down from generation to generation. Colorism not only happens in

the African American community but also outside of this community. African American women are taught at a young age to compare their skin color to those who are lighter than them by their mothers and grandmothers. These powerful influences pave the way for how young African American women will view themselves and interact with others in society.

### Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical orientation of this study will be Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. Maslow's theory consists of four levels that are considered to be important to an individual's normal function of living and increasing life satisfaction. The third level of the pyramid is self-esteem needs. Maslow states that an ability to develop self-esteem also is contributed to whether a person is loved and embraced by members in their families as well members around the community. "As individuals, we naturally wish to excel or be exceptional, to be noticed for our unique talents and capabilities. Once one has some measure of self-esteem and confidence, one gains the psychological freedom to be creative and to grow as well as to be more generous to others (Maslow, 1987, pp. 21-22)." (POH,2016)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory will be the theoretical framework of this specific study. The hopes of this study will be to provide insight on the factors that African American woman have low amounts of self-esteem and colorism plays a part in this.

## Contribution of Study to Micro and/or Macro Social Work Practice

This research can contribute to both the micro and macro phases of social work practice by creating a deeper discussion and awareness of this issue amongst African American women. This can allow researchers to push for the development of social change, give a better insight when working in a predominately African American community as well as working with the culture. Knowing how to interact or identify a client who may have no self-esteem or does not know how to provide self-love. This study could contribute to possibly introducing more interventions such as incorporating classes that introduce the self-love/self-esteem concept to African American women of all ages. Current efforts are being made to empower African American girls and women include Black Girls Rock Inc, or the My Black is Beautiful. Black Girls Rock Inc is a youth empowerment organization that is a nonprofit created to encourage and promote the healthy development of young African American adolescence. Discussing topics such as self-worth, future aspirations and goals. This organization offers mentoring, culture exploration and art education to improve the lives of young African American girls. "BLACK GIRLS ROCK! seeks to build the self-esteem and self-worth of young women of color by changing their outlook on life, broadening their horizons, and helping them to empower themselves" (BGR, 2012). My Black is Beautiful is a program created to acknowledge and normalize black beauty. This program works to provide awareness of the societal and cultural stigmas that remain around self-image. "We're here to celebrate all that

is beautiful about black culture, from shape to shade to self-expression” (MBIB, n.d.). The involvement of teachers is also important as colorism begins to become more visible as African American girls get older. “It can lead to the research that is often controversial, may well threaten those who have power and will certainly empower those who do not” (Morris, T, 2013).

### Summary

Chapter one introduces the research question: What are the factors of Colorism and how does Colorism influence the social outcome of African American women. The paradigm chosen is discussed and an explanation is provided on why this paradigm has been chosen. Literature Review is displayed on the common themes and factors of colorism as well as social outcomes. Chapter one identifies Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory as the theoretical orientation used for this study as well as the possible contribution this study can have with micro or macro practice.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ENGAGEMENT

#### Introduction

The focus of chapter two is to discuss the engagement phase of the study. Details regarding the location of the study site, participants and gatekeeper can be found in this chapter. Self-preparation, diversity, ethical and political issues are all introduced by the researcher. This section concludes with the topic of the role technology has in the study.

#### Research Site

For the purpose of this study, a community college located in Northern California was targeted for this study. More specifically, the researcher focused on the African American organization held on campus called Umoja leadership collective program. Umoja is a term that means unity in Kiswahili. Umoja scholars is a program that is dedicated to improving, encouraging and strengthening the educational experience of African American students as well as first-generation college students. This program assists students with academic support services and provides students with leadership skills, tutoring, counseling. Umoja also provides academic events that include workshops, college trips and community service.

## Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site

The researcher engaged with Umoja's program coordinator by introducing herself and explaining the role the researcher possesses within the study. Next, the researcher explained the study and the purpose for the study. The effects of colorism and the experiences of the African American community are unique and detrimental to the way African American women interact with others in society and how they view themselves. This study is important to inform future clinicians and social workers on how to work with this population. Engagement began with an email to the Umoja scholar's coordinator. The researcher provided the gatekeeper with a brief overview of the study including any assistance needed on gatekeeper's behalf. The time, date and access to the site was also listed in the email. When approved, the researcher provided gatekeepers with an Agency permission letter. Researcher provided the site with a flyer to assist in recruitment of participants and asked gatekeepers to inform students who may be interested. Research participants inquired through email. The researcher then gathered 10 key players who found a strong interest in the study to participate in an in-person interview.

## Self-Preparation

The researcher used gathered information from the literature review as an important aspect of self-preparation. Research was conducted on the many factors that play into colorism as well as the affect it has on the lives of African

American women. This assisted the researcher to guide the conversation and ask for input of participants. The researcher created a flyer that served as a recruitment tool for volunteers. The flyer requested the discussion of African American woman who have experienced colorism, have been associated with the stereotypes of being light-skinned or dark-skinned and would like to share their experience. The flyer provided information that the researcher is an African American woman so participants would not feel uneasy about who they will be speaking with. The flyer provided the researchers email so that future participants can inquire and participate in the study. In order to build rapport, the researcher visited the Umoja program site twice through the week to join campus activities, community service. Researcher provided a list of interview questions in addition to the consent form to each participant. Since the researcher has experienced colorism, in preparation for this sensitive topic it is important that there is self-awareness by having a conscious understanding of the researcher's personal biases, knowledge of character as well as personal feelings around this topic. Being an African American dark-skinned woman, the researcher kept a research journal present which assisted in documenting biases or negative emotions that arose during this study.

### Diversity Issues

The researcher is a dark-skinned woman who may unintentionally create an awkward space for participants to share their experiences freely. Diversity issues

that arose while conducting the study is participants holding onto the fear of being judged by the researcher. For example, participants may question how the researcher can connect and compare to the feelings of a woman of lighter skinned. If the researcher was of White-American descent, it may help the participants feel as though they are educating the researcher on the issues within their community. While conducting the interviews, the researcher was sure to speak on behalf of her own experiences of colorism to show a transparency and similarity in experiences. This had a positive impact on the interviewees as it reduced any fear of power differential or feelings of being misunderstood.

### Ethical Issues

In attempt to avoid any ethical issues, researcher submitted the study to the Institutional Review Board (IBR) to obtain approval. While conducting face-to-face interviews, it is imperative to reduce any chances of a breach in confidentiality. Researcher has reassured participants of the study that they would not be identified by birth name but instead by a pseudonym name for any written responses. Participants of the study were provided with an informed consent document prior to the study being conducted. **(see appendix A)**. The Informed consent discusses the description of the study, length of study interviews, and confidentiality agreement. Responses to Interview questions were recorded via audio tape recorder and transcribed into a secured journal. During the interview, two participants mentioned their own names as well as the names of their peers.

Responses recorded that could have potentially identify participants have been terminated. Data recorded will be terminated one year after study is submitted.

As stated previously, researcher is an African American woman who is dark-skinned and has experience her own unique experience with colorism. Personal biases or opinions may arise during the interview process with participants where the researcher may disagree with responses or may be presented with countertransference. In substitute of projecting feelings into the study, researcher made sure to address personal thoughts, biases or negative attitudes with research advisor.

#### Political Issues

As a post positivism researcher, participants may see the researcher as someone who holds power. Power, regarding how the data will be used and collected is chosen by the researcher and not the participants. The researcher made sure to build a strong rapport in addition to reminding participants that the study which is being conducted and data which has been collected will assist in bettering the community and lives of African American women.

Being a dark-skinned African American woman, the researcher could be received as judgmental in the eyes of light-skinned participants. A political issue that arose during this study is the embedded intra-racism that is deep rooted in the African American community. 4 out of 10 participants held back answers due

to being cautious of my reaction. Light-skinned participants may feel judged due to personal colorism experiences which can result in deceptive answers during the interview process. Researcher was reassuring toward participants who appeared timid to answer specific questions, that they were free of judgement by the researcher as well as reminding the participant the purpose of the study that is being conducted. Researcher conducted the conversation with honesty and addressed any concerns of participants. Participants were reminded at the beginning of the interview that their participation in the study is voluntary.

### The Role of Technology in Engagement

Technology did play a minimal role within the engagement process. It began with an email to the site gatekeepers regarding conducting the study. An email was sent to the Umoja Coordinator after to give thanks for allowing the study to be conducted. Communication was done through face to face meetings.

### Summary

Chapter two discussed the engagement with the site, the gatekeepers and the participants of the study. How the researcher self-prepared for the study to take place was also a topic in this chapter. Next, the discussion of diversity, ethical and political issues were expressed and how they were resolved. The Role of technology in engagement is briefly discussed and this closes out chapter two.

## CHAPTER THREE

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Introduction

Chapter three brings forward the discussion of implementation and gathering data for this study. It begins with the topic of the study participants and how they were selected. Next, data gathering process is discussed in addition to how the data was recorded and analyzed. Lastly, the topic of termination and follow up and communication of findings to close out the chapter.

#### Study Participants

The participants in this study are African American women who are members of the Umoja program. The Umoja scholars is a program that assists and encourages the academic support of students, predominantly African American or first-generation students. African American students involved in this program typically have social science majors in addition to African American studies. As a member of Umoja scholars, students have the ability to develop leadership skills, participate in community service activities and attend Historical Black College Universities within the United States. Participants of this study were able to identify themselves as a light, brown or dark-skinned women. Participants are all women over 18 years-old and did not require a guardian to

give consent for participation in this study. Each individual participant has experienced intra-racism, colorism and were able to articulate this clearly while expressing the effect it has had on their lives.

### Selection of Participants

Purposive sampling was used as strategy for selecting participants for this study. Purposive sampling is typically used for participants who can provide the researcher with the correct and useful information for data use. The purposeful sampling strategy that was used by the researcher was sampling intensity as it is helpful in choosing the cases that serve as good examples for the study. The researcher selected 10 voluntary African American female students over the age of 18 from different backgrounds, different occupations, different majors to provide a broader version of experiences. The reason for accepting 10 African American female students was to have a broad range of African American women who vary in skin tones. A list of interview questions **(See appendix A)** was provided to participants which assisted the researcher that each skin tone of African American women is accounted for including identifying their occupation, age and major. This provided the researcher with more insight on different experiences of those who have light, brown and darker skin tones. Participants were recruited with assistance of gatekeepers who provided African American women with the flyer of the study. The flyer provided a brief description of the study, information about the researcher as well as contact information for

interested participants. The Researcher received a total of six emails and five phone calls in response to recruitment. Researcher contacted participants who volunteered for the interview via email or phone call to explain the purpose of the study and answer any questions potential recruitments had at the time. One participant removed themselves from the study due to a personal matter. When participants agreed to participate, they were recruited and given three separate dates to schedule an interview. Next, participants were provided with the agency permission letter, consent form and interview questions in person. Of the ten participants, three identified as light skinned, three who identified as dark skinned and four who identified as brown skinned. Participants were all between the ages of 20-27 years old and had a variety of backgrounds regarding education and employment.

### Data Gathering

Data was gathered with the use of the qualitative method. Face to Face interviews were conducted at a location requested by the participant. Interviews were conducted for a duration of 30-45 minutes. There was one interview that was conducted for over an hour. With the use of descriptive strategies, the questions focused on the participants elaborating on the specific times and events where they experienced colorism during their life. Descriptive questions allowed participants to describe their knowledge and personal viewpoints of colorism. Questions inquired about how colorism has affected their lives in their

community and their relationships with friends and significant others. During the interview process, the researcher was knowledgeable regarding the self-esteem amongst African American women, informed participants of the study being conducted and discussed confidentiality and reassured them that there will be no harmful responses towards them for completing the study.

### Phases of Data Collection

Researcher collected data with the use of descriptive and structural interviews. The first stage is the engagement of gatekeepers and participants. As participants were recruited, permission letters, consent forms and discussion of the purpose of the study was provided to participants. The second phase included an arrangement to schedule in-person interview with each individual participant. Questions during the interview addressed the knowledge of colorism, the individual's perception of colorism and the potential impact it has had on the African American community. Interview questions allowed each individual participant the opportunity to address and articulate their unique personal experiences with colorism. Phrases or stereotypes developed around their skin tone was addressed. Researcher is an African American woman who has experienced low self-esteem because of the events in her life, the researcher shared her experience as a way of engaging and building rapport with the participants involved in the study. Although the questions were structured multiple questions became apparent during interview process. The final stage of

data collection, the interview was summarized for participant to ensure the researcher has an accurate understanding of what was discussed. Termination concluded with questions or concerns of participant being addressed. Individual participants were thanked for participation the study, interview will conclude with a brief overview and purpose of the study. The focus of interview allowed participants the ability to speak their truths and assist them to feel as though they have been heard, in addition to being heard correctly. During the interview, the researcher was personable and observed body language between the different individual interviews. Low self-esteem can show in body language and the way someone speaks. After Interview process of the study has concluded, data gathered was transcribed from audio-recorder and transferred to a research journal.

### Data Recording

Individual interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to a research journal. Participants were aware of the interview being recorded prior to the interview process and agreed to being recorded by signing the informed consent. Notes which were taken on the computer are encrypted with a password that only the researcher can access. Audio-recorder, research computer, and research journals are held in a protected location. Research journals discusses common themes, similar or unique experiences of participants. The journal contains information about the overall interview process and initial feelings about

the interview by the researcher. Recordings were transferred and transcribed to research journals, audio recordings will be destroyed and terminated one year after study has been conducted. The use of a voice recorder will serve as an accurate source that will reassure information is not misconstrued.

### Data Analysis Procedures

Evaluation of this project is carried out by using the Post-Positivism approach. Research is collected in the form of words and is analyzed using two specific approaches such as the "Top Down" and the "Bottom Up" approach that allows the theories to develop and search for patterns as well as descriptions of the actual process how the study went.

The "Bottom-up" approach is the specific approach conducted, which allows the development of a theory based on the experience data gathered by the study. The first stages of synthesis began with open coding which creates a breakdown of the individual interviews into themes and categories. The researcher scanned conversations of an interview to conduct an analysis on in detail.

Axial Coding is a process that allows the categories and the statements made by the participants to link together with the dimensions. The links allow there to be correlation between categories and dimensions to form a relationship. For this analysis, the researcher created a coded table which displays what the

participants have experienced. Experiences have a significant correlation and lead to a more focused part of the data.

Selective coding is where the researcher has combined the categories and dimensions in order to develop a specific theory. It is important to first come up with the core category. This is the unifying theme that presents itself more than once and is a noticeable pattern during this phase. In order to find the core theory, the researcher began with a blank piece of paper to jot down words and first thoughts after analyzing the data. In order to, in a sense, purify the theory the researcher focused on the strategies that eliminated certain categories that do not present themselves to be relevant and replacing any dimensions that may be missing. When building the theory, the researched asked questions that could describe the process of how the statement was developed and what the participants may have gone through during that exact moment.

Using the "bottom-up" approach appears to be the best approach for this study because of the personal experience that will be shared. It will help get to the root of where it all begins and provide an actual explanation from the source.

### Summary

Chapter three briefly discusses the implementation stage of the research study. First, the participants of the study and specific process selection are

mentioned. Second, the chapter goes on to describe the process of gathering data, phases of data collection and how the researcher recorded the data.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATION

#### Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings of the interviews which were conducted over a period. A discussion will also take place of how the data was analyzed and Implication of Findings for Micro and/or Macro Practice. A total of 10 African American Women of various skin-tones were interviewed over a four-month span which began in December of 2018.

#### Data Analysis

The researcher both coded and examined the interviews personally to identify potential themes that arose. This is called thematic analysis. First, codes were created on a secured Google Docs file, then divided into common themes. Some common themes that arose during the individual interviews vary depending on the skin color of the participant. Those with a lighter-skinned complexion had common feelings of being judged for being rude, bougie or seen as “too good”. The brown skinned complexion participants developed themes of feeling invisible in the spectrum of colorism and being misclassified as just bi-racial instead of black. Dark-skinned women developed themes of feeling unattractive with dark skin and look down upon. Examples of common themes that arose during this study included the acknowledgement of a structured

hierarchy within the African American community, beauty standards, social media references. Themes varied or based on the skin color of participant, although who participants believe benefit from colorism was also a common theme despite skin color.

### Data Interpretation

There were several themes which emerged while conducting the interviews. These themes are discussed below.

### Beauty Standard

Each participant who identified as a dark-skinned woman shared their perspective that both light and/or brown skinned women are often favored in terms of beauty. It was a theme for interviewees to state that other African American individuals would point out to them that their skin color was darker than a lighter individual.

Cause since like the beginning of time they were always seen as like the prettier ones. And now like people are kind of appreciating dark skin women, but it's kind of just like, I don't know, like I feel like it's not the same appreciation. (Participant #2, December. 2018)

Another participant who identified as a light-skinned woman had similar feelings and stated:

Like the darker skin is as less value. It's always been some type of divide that if you have, if you have like lighter skin, but it's like maybe if it, if it's lighter skin because you're the closer, the lighter you are, the closer you are to being like a white American or being white. So, it's just like something about white beauty. But like every everyone else, like in the white culture, they want to be darker.

(Participant #4, January. 2019)

Another participant who identified as a brown-skinned woman stated:

“My mom also too, like in the Philippines, there are a lot of people in Asia also do that too, people in Africa do it as like a lighter complexion is just more attractive, more appealing, appealing looking” (Participant #8, Feb. 2019).

### Dating/ Friendships

Common themes that were found in terms of dating and friendship dynamic. Majority of dark-skinned participants felt as though they were ignored or less approached when they were in the presence of their lighter skin friends. In comparison, women who identify as light-skinned noticed this as well.

Participant #4 states:

And I feel a difference if we're like in the dating world and it's just like, say for instance, me and my friend are both into some guy and the guy will be like, “oh, well I don't want to talk to you because you're darker than her.” So, he's going to want to talk to me. So, it

was just like, wait, what? Like what, you know, for one, you don't even know me. And for you to just judge off the base of my color of my skin is actually ridiculous because I can be a terrible, I can be pretty on the outside, but I can be a terrible person inside then.

(Participant #4, January 2018)

Participant #2, who identifies as a dark-skinned woman states that her dynamic is different.

In friendships, nothing really. I don't think that people, I don't know, if people weren't friends with me because I was dark skin and then that's on them. But I know dating, um, one time a guy told me that he would have dated me if I wasn't black. (Participant #2,

December 2018)

Participant #7 who identifies as a light-skinned woman began her interview with providing examples of colorism. She states:

Yeah, so like, um, I would go out with some of my friends and, um, I've gone out with some who are lighter skinned than me and who are darker skin than me. And so like, um, one time going out with someone who is darker skinned than me. Like when we got back, it was like she was upset with me because she's like," um, all those guys paid attention to them and they noticed you a lot because you're lighter skin and um, you just don't know what it feels like to

be a dark skinned girl and go out and it's just different. (Participant #7, Feb. 2019)

She also stated that she had a hard time making friends with dark-skinned woman due to being judged.

So, when I first started working a certain company, um, now of course there could be other factors that play into it, but you have mmm. Guys of all different skin tones, African American guys of all different skin tones. You put them in a room, then you put girls of African American girls of different skin tones so you can put them in the rooms. So, We're all in the same room. The guys are fine. The guys, the interactions with the guys are like, they don't care like this, like Yeah. What's up? Um, the girls, you could see that the darker skinned girls are like grouping together and like not wanting to talk to me because of whatever they feel. And it looks like they feel like, I feel like I'm better than them and I attribute it to, um, skin tone. Me personally, because it's like if I walked into the room and I say hi to everybody for as I walk into the room and then y'all click up and then it's just me over here, y'all don't want to talk to me. And you're like looking at me like, "Ooh, who she thinks she is" because I'm talking to the guys now because I've tried talking to you and you don't want to talk to me. (Participant #7, Feb. 2019)

Participant #1 shares her experience of the dating and friendship dynamic:

Um, but I feel like black men, I do feel like just naturally black men gravitate towards my light skinned friends first. That has always been a thing. I've, I have never been in my 25 years. I have never been out. And like I am the one that is the main one being talked to. The main one being pushed upon that doesn't typically happen at typically is going to my light skinned friends first. Funny that when I go out with like predominantly white crowds, that tends to be when I am the one who is being approached." She continues, "I do feel like when you know you go out as a dark skin girl, I feel like you go out and you naturally have come to know and accept that the light skinned girls are going to get talked to first. They're going to get approached first, you might not get talked to at all. And if you do get talked to, it's going to be like an afterthought after he's been rejected by other girls or he just not going to talk to you the whole time and then maybe hit you up on some sly, you know, texts and you, oh, I thought you looked so great, but you can't do that in person (Participant # 1 December, 2018).

### The Male Impact

The male impact was mentioned by three different participants who feel as though males have created the division between African American women. Participant #8 perception of the male impact is as follows:

Just holding people accountable for little statements, you know, checking men on statements too. Because I feel like men kind of stir the pot as well indirectly. And it kind of affects how women view each other. You know what I mean? Getting men into the conversation is very important, right? Because you must think about it. I mean the formula of getting the light skinned person, if I had to come from a dark background. (Participant #8, Feb. 2019)

Participant #7 states:

Guys are the first ones to be like, oh, I'm trying to give me a light skin. So, we can have some pretty little baby or "I don't date dark skins "you'll get, or unless it's like I'm a light skinned guy who was like, okay, I want to get a dark skin so we can just make a cute will. You know the way that guys think when they're choosing their mate is more geared toward preference over a lighter skinned woman. And so, as a dark-skinned woman it's like how you see that in still believe that your desirable or that you're beautiful or that you are enough of what a guy would want as opposed to, you know, being light skin. Especially if you've heard that all your eyes, your whole timeline.

She continues:

The belief systems that have been built for so long need to adjust. There needs to be a reinforcement of that, like being broken down

because they're only in, it's like the reason we have these interactions is just because of what we've been taught in our homes, what we've been taught by men. Um, and now what they say, you know, and that has a lot to do with us. Like we want to be desired. And you know, a lot of our goals, a lot of women, their goal is to be married to, you know, a man who loves them. And it's like if men are just like, you know, they uplift or they talk highly of only a certain type of woman, now it's starting to be like a certain type of body type. You know, um, or a certain size or a certain skin tone. And it's like, if you only do that, then someone who is not that is not going to feel good. They're not going to feel desired. Or if they do feel that, it's like, "oh, I can't be desired by someone who I desire. (Participant #7, Feb. 2019)

Participant #2 mentions:

I think it's a, it's like an African American man thing. Like you need to stop pitting the two shades against one another" It's like light versus dark. Yeah. And it's like you never hear like I like brown skins. It's literally like light, dark and then because the men are pitting the two shades against each other. It's causing this unnecessary rift within our community because now it's like, light girls don't like dark girls and dark and dark girls don't like, light girls cause even I find myself looking at it like light skinned girls and I'm

like, she looks like a bitch. Even if I don't know her. She could be like the sweetest girl, but like it's just like instinct to be like, she's light skinned, she's probably a bitch. (Participant #2, December 2018)

Well, simple. A lot of, a lot of, um, darker men rather have kids with the lighter girls. Most is it, it's kind of rare, almost rare to see two people to say complexion having kids together or being together. Um, and, I think sometimes they look at the darker women, I want to say more in a sexual light, um, because sometimes we're just, are they just look at us like objects instead of actual people? (Participant #10, March. 2018).

### Benefits of Colorism

The question, “who do you believe benefits from colorism?” allowed participants to be honest with themselves. 8 out of 10 participants who identifies as dark, brown and light skinned agreed that individuals who benefit from colorism are those who are light skinned. When Participant #5 responded, she stated “People who benefit from colorism again is the rhetoric of the lights skin. It just goes back to, you know, being privileged of having a lighter shade.

Participant #9 who identifies as a light skinned woman states:

Uh, probably light skins in a white environment.” She explains, “Yeah, I feel like things are changing now but I did at one point

always feel like, um, white people feel more comfortable with some of these lighter because they would assume maybe you know, they're like mixed or anything like that. (Participant #9, March. 2019)

Participant #3 whom identifies as a brown skinned woman states:

I definitely think a light skin people do. I think it even can go back to the fact that like we always say white people get it better. And so, it's just, it's the same thing just with the African Community, the lighter people in a sense. Do get it better because they're closer to the white people. (Participant #3, December. 2018)

In contrast, participant #4 who identifies as a light skinned woman and participant #8 who identifies as brown skinned believe that colorism does not benefit any individual regardless of skin tone.

I don't feel like anyone benefits from colorism. I feel like it's another word or another phrase to continue to separate people within their own race. it's not something that is going to be beneficial for anyone as a whole, but I just feel like it's another, another form of what appropriation or some type of impact to not have us work collectively as whole and within our race and with not even just our races, other races too. Like there's some type of making us separated so we aren't in some type of unit need to be the best

people that we can be for our culture or whatever the case may be.

(Participant #4, January. 2018)

I do not believe it benefits anyone. I almost believe that colorism can be beneficial for light skin woman in the work setting however when you do have that light skinned girl who kind of falls in, plays into that stereotype thinking she's going to just wing it and get by because of whatever, and she either is being overlooked because they don't want somebody who in their playing around. You know what I mean versus end. But then that's the thing, I don't even think that's a colorism thing. That's just more than it gets into the person personality of the person because then they start to fall into the perception of what it is. You know what I mean? So that's also a thing too because like, cause then you have all three skin tones who can all equally just get hired just based off their work ethic.

(Participant #8, Feb. 2019)

### Hierarchy of Skin Color

The definition of colorism became a theme of acknowledging the internalized structural hierarchy within the African American community. 10/10 acknowledged that in terms of colorism, there is a social structure that accepts dark skin women as being held to a lower standard or “at the bottom of the totem pole”.

Personally, I think colorism also is in different communities to such as Mexicans. Like a lot of Mexicans, they're either hella white or they're darker skinned Mexicans and they go through the same things that we go through as African Americans. So, I feel like it's just not going to get better. It's, it's things that have been happening for you decades and decades and decades. Like in Mexico, if you're lighter, you're rich, you have money. If you're the darker ones, you're in the fields, you're working, you're sort of less than. So, I think it's something that is happens in at least these two different groups. Um, I just don't think, I don't think it's going to get any better. As sad as it is, I just feel like it may get more swept under the rug and it's just going to become normal. And people are just going to stop talking about it. (Participant #3, December. 2018)

Participant #2 describes her perception of colorism:

It's a social structure within the black community. So basically, if your dark skin, you're kind of at the bottom of the totem pole as opposed to light skins who are like the top of the totem pole and they're like seen as pretty dark skins are kind of shunned and seen as like the ugly version of black people, brown skins you never hear, they're kind of just in the middle of like everything. (Participant #2, December. 2018)

Participant #10 who identifies as a dark-skinned woman states:

I personally feel like my skin tone brings negativity because when you kind of walk into stores or even like walking amongst a group of, they kind of, you can tell like they feel, you can tell how they feel, kind of, you kind of feel that they, that the darker person is walking amongst them, um, is bad, you know, negative.

Participant #6 states:

A lot of dark-skinned girls get made fun of like, you know, they good. Well, you're dark skinned, you're like the bottom of the barrel and if she's light skin then you're like, Ooh, that's, that's the baby right there. (Participant #6, February. 2018)

### Stereotypes

It was common for women to hear the phrase “you’re pretty for a dark skin girl”. Stereotypes were more along the lines of actions based on color. Dark skin women have been described as ratchet or too loud, hard to relate too and angry. Light skin women would commonly hear, “you never text back because that is a light skin thing to do”. People assume that those who are light skin are stuck up, they are better than another and/or rude. A few interviewees have stated that they recognize when other women are ignoring them or being standoffish towards them due to the pre judgements of being light skin.

Participant #8 who identifies as brown skinned describes stereotypes she has heard throughout her lifetime.

That for like example, like they say like light skinned girls are stuck up. They're kind of hard to talk to either in either for as a friend or trying to get at for. I hear, "Oh you look pretty for a mixed girl" or stuff like that is just this like, come on man. (Participant #8, Feb. 2019)

Participant #9 describes her interactions with her friends as a light skinned woman:

Um, well last couple of trips I've been working with, uh, a dark-skinned girl and she feels the need to call me "light skin". She'll just be like, "okay, light skin". If we're talking about something and I like, "oh, that's what the light skins be doing." Or a bunch of coworkers will go out to eat and yeah that whole you don't text back. Cause there's a light skin thing. that's what gets on my nerves most about the light skin and dark skin thing is like we all do it. You don't have to attach that stereotype to whatever behavior I'm doing, they had me questioning myself from it. That's all I was sitting there thinking about it... I'm trying to see. Yeah. Cause I'm sitting there thinking like, because I like to think about privileges. You know what I mean? Everyone has a privilege in some kind of way and like, and it's like, "okay, I'm sorry." I was sitting there thinking like, am I not, am I being kind of mean because I'm privileged in a way to do that.

Like I'm just trying to think like why they are saying to me.

(Participant #9, March. 2019)

Participant #10 states its common for her to hear comments “Say if I'm walking on the street, “Hey, beautiful chocolate”. Um, people say things like, um, some people give you compliments on your skin tone but it is not often”.

Participant #3 who identifies as brown skin states:

Um, I would definitely say we do have someone that we work with, she's darker and she always has an attitude. She always has problems. She's always mad. And I would say a customer one time came up. Like “you're always smiling, you're always happy”.

“What's wrong with her? She, she always seems like she's just in a bad mood.”. And that just goes back to what people would say that, you know, the darker skinned girls are always mad. They always have issues; they're always frustrated and they're not happy. And then you have the lighter ones that are always cheery, and it looks like their life is just so peachy and so creamy. So, I think it just, it takes back to that like every stereotype somehow, even if we don't want it to fit, somehow it comes back and fit. (Participant #3, December. 2018)

Participant 2 states:

Just like cause okay. There's also like this stigma with like the color, like the colors, cause it's like light skinned girls are bitchy,

they're rude, they're, they pull all the dude's like, they're just like, they have the worst attitude. That's like light skinned girl stigma. And then there's like the dark girl's stigma. We're loud. We have like the worst attitude. We're ratchet and me standing like we just look like we stank. So, it's like these two are just like pitting each other. So, I'm pretty sure like if a light skinned girl sees me, she's probably going to be like, her attitude is terrible. Like she looks like she's stank, she's just looks like she's loud. I see a light skinned girl and like she looks like a bitch. Like she, her attitude probably terrible. And some girls do fall into that stigma. And then there's others, but it's just like, it's like media movies, like all this stuff has just made us this unnecessary unspoken war between like the two color, the two shades. Brown skin people are just chilling. Yeah, in the middle. Just like minding own business. Then it's like the lights and the darks are just like always going on at it for no reason. So yeah. (Participant #2, December. 2018)

Participant #5 who identifies as brown-skinned mentions:

I remember it was my birthday, uh, and I was walking on campus and this guy stopped me and he was just like, "you're so beautiful to be a dark-skinned girl". And at first, I didn't understand that. And so, I thought it was a compliment. I was like, "oh, thank you". And then when I walked away and I was like "for a dark-skinned girl", I

was like, he just good have said that I was pretty. And so, um, that's like one thing that always stuck to me and what I experienced and my community so far. (Participant #5, February. 2019)

### Social Media

Based on the interview, interviewees stated that social media seems to praise the light skin, curly haired group of women rather than dark skin women. If dark skin women are a topic on social media, interviewees have stated that it is usually extremely dark women pictured with a colored background, such as a bright yellow.

Oh totally. I think that number one, just before going into the colorism thing, I think social media has so much of an impact on all of our lives, especially you like young people who are trying to like to learn to love and grow themselves. Even myself at 25, you know, I think that when you look at your social and you see different things glorified, it makes you feel inadequate. And I think that being light skin shape, like a coke bottle is like the thing to be all right. And when you look online, that's like the thing to be habits. The ass, totally long hair. That's totally what you see. And you would perceive to be like, that's where I'm trying to get right. You know, like, oh my gosh, I need to, I need to become that. I need to be that." But you can't change anything about you because your skin

tone is not something that you could change easily. Especially if you're already a dark skin woman. It's hard. You can't go lighter. Yeah. You know, you can go lighter without chemical. It is messing up your, your skin, you know. Um, so I definitely feel like social media plays a huge role and colorism and perception all the way. And I see something talking about social media. I see a Twitter post the other day and it was this beautiful African American woman. She was dark skin. She was just like, you know, we're on Twitter, just like showing a little video looks super cute. And somebody complimented and said something about her. And the retweet was like, I want you guys to start complimenting dark skinned women without pointing out their skin tone. Don't just compliment their skin compliments something else about them other than the fact that they're dark and beautiful. (Participant #1, December. 2018)

Participant #10 acknowledges:

Um, I think color is and does have a huge effect on social media because there's so many models you see even, okay, let's even talk about the baby. Like the baby Instagram's, if you like scroll through it, you'll see nothing but light skin babies and everybody's like, "oh, she's so cute. So cute." So, what I do is I'll keep on looking at and see the dark skin baby, you know, and it's almost never probably one out of 20. and then even like, wasn't models

you'll see like the lighter skin models, you barely see the darker skin ones. Um, but when you do see the darker skin models, they do wear a lot of makeup. Like they'll put up a bunch of makeup on, um, to where they can, uh, contour their faces to be like appear lighter. That's like a new thing they've been doing the, with the, with the glowing their faces. (Participant #10 March. 2019).

### Solution

Regarding a solution for colorism, each interviewee stated that the way to overcome this issue is to come together as one. Have an open, honest and genuine dialogue about how colorism has affected them, individuals should discuss the stereotypes in society and change the narrative rather than having a divide.

Participant #7 who identifies as light skinned states:

it's like we shouldn't even have to wait till we're 40, 50, 60 to really love our skin or to be able to appreciate our other black sisters, or we shouldn't even be separated by skin. And so, we need to really like normalize this and make this a conversation. So, like you said, like the younger generation, so that they don't even have to go through that. So that has something that stopped because it all stems from slavery and these effects are still affecting our people today. And that's keeping us in slave as an African American

community. So, in order for us to stop this slave mentality that we have, we have to stop it somewhere and we need to start having the now because it's like, how many years ago did that happen?

(Participant #7, February. 2019)

Participant #4 mentions:

we should stop having these battles with one another. Like, “oh well she's dark skin so she must act like this or she or she must don't like me cause she dark skinned. She thinks that I'm entitled” or like a dark skin girl. Like, “oh well she's light skinned, she thinks she's entitled.” And like we've kind of stopped having these all judgment, those pre judgement and like those thoughts. And um, based off of what we've been taught, we have to basically decode our minds from what has been perceived to be better or preferred. There's, there's no preference. I mean, obviously we gravitate to what we like, and we gravitate to what we love. But amongst African American, we got to stop battling with each other that we think that someone is better than the other. because at the end of the day, we are all great. We're at the ended, they were all equal. Um, and I feel like what one thing that we have to do is to show that we can work in unite and not be against each other because, the only competition that we should have is it within ourselves and having, have competition with others. Um, because that, that to me

is like setting yourself up for failure, trying to compete you trying to hang and you're trying to hang in, coincide with someone else. Um, but you have to look and reflect within, like we can only control what we have control over. We can't control others and their perceptions, their thoughts, their ideas. So, um, I feel like if we contain you to, I say uplift each other, um, encourage one another, um, that are our skin as a whole. We're all different shades and all the same shade. Our skin as a whole, is beautiful. (Participant #4, January. 2019)

Participant #5 suggests:

I feel like we need to throw away the, um, stereotypes or perceptions, the standards, the systematic oppression that were geared towards us to separate us because it got dates way back into the air of slavery where they would separate the darks and the lights and the lights will be in the house in the dark skinned will be all on the field. And so I feel like if we can cancel not to say cancel that history, but to take, not to take it out, the word I'm trying to say and trying to get through is to yes, acknowledge that that happened, but also acknowledge that we can all work together as one and be, you know, these queens that we are, because we're all queens and in all aspects in the dark and not in the dark skin color but in the color of African Americans. Cause because we're all

different shades and that's what's the beauty about being African American is we call coming in these different shapes and we're all so unique and to be, to be allowed to be in those different shades, but to still have that one title that yes, we are African American and we can all have these different shades but come together as that those queens that we are at the same, wow. We are beautiful in all our different shades. We make up our own rainbow. (Participant #5, February. 2019)

Participant 10 concludes the interviews with an internal suggestion:

First of all, we would have to love ourselves. If we love ourselves then we can love other people. We have understanding that for one we are all the same. For one, we are for two are family. Um, and, and we should stick together and, and uplift our race. Um, I feel like that's the way we can come together. (Participant #10, March. 2019)

#### Implication of Findings for Micro and/or Macro Practice

In terms of Micro practice, this study and context can assist social service professionals when working with individuals and communities where there are predominantly African American women present. It is significant to acknowledge the elements of being an African American woman, it is important to know that each experience varies depending on the individuals skin tone. Understanding

the background and/or the thought process of African American women can improve the professional and client relationship. It is important to provide clients with tools that will leave them with feelings of empowerment, understanding of self, and positive coping mechanisms.

### Summary

Chapter four discusses the findings of the interview and how the researcher interprets this data, how the data was analyzed and the implications of micro practice.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

#### Introduction

This final chapter provides information on how the researcher will terminate the relationship with both the study site as well as participants. Next, the chapter will discuss how the findings of this study will be communicated to participants as well as future hopes of progress in relation to participants and research focus. plans are put in place for termination, follow up of the findings. Finally, the chapter concludes with how this information will be spread so that it is useful.

#### Termination of Study

In conclusion of the study, participants, and study site gatekeepers will be respectfully thanked for volunteering to be a part of the study. As a precaution, participants will be asked if they have any questions or concerns regarding the study. The researcher will be sure to follow up with a poster and report of findings for participants and gatekeepers. There will be a formal and informal level of disengagement with the research site.

## Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

There will not be an ongoing relationship with study participants. After findings become published the relationship will discontinue. Participants who are interested in the details of the report will be guided to the appropriate website. If there are any future questions, participants will be guided to speak with Dr. Lori Brown, Faculty Supervisor.

## Future Hopes

The purpose of this current study is to assist social service professionals with a background of colorism and how this has affected African American women of a variety of skin tones. Participant #5 mentions “one suggestion I would say that would help for social workers going forth. If they do have like a little Kiddo or having a hard time understanding what that person is going through. Educate yourself, get books and get books that look like then, um, uh, advocate for, you know, commercials to have, you know, different, various types of skin color that promotes like things in society and just, just be an advocate, be our ally and just try to show empathy and compassion, don't disregard our feelings. That's the main thing”.

This study brings an important topic to light that often becomes diluted or not heavily focused on within the African American Community. Each participant discussed the importance and significance of having a conversation that is

honest and respectful of how colorism has affected each individual. This researcher hopes that not only a consistent discussion will allow this topic to become normalized but hopefully sparks the conversation toward finding a solution and/or change.

#### Communication of Findings to Study Site and Dissemination Plan

Research findings will be disseminated through California State University San Bernardino Scholar works where the report will be published and kept electronically. The research site will also be provided a copy if requested.

#### Summary

Chapter 5 termination process with both the study site as well as participants. Second, the chapter discusses how the findings of this study are going to be communicated to participants. Next, the chapter discusses the future hopes of progress regarding participants and research focus. Finally, plans are put in place for termination and the chapter concludes with how this information will be spread so that it is useful.

APPENDIX A  
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT(S) (INCLUDING  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, INFORMED  
CONSENT, DEBRIEFING STATEMENT, IRB APPROVAL)

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. HOW OLD ARE YOU?
2. WHAT IS YOUR COLLEGE MAJOR?
3. WHAT IS YOUR OCCUPATION?
4. WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF:  
  
BROWN-SKINNED  
LIGHT-SKINNED OR  
DARK-SKINNED?
5. WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OR PERCEPTION OF COLORISM?
6. AT WHAT AGE DID YOU KNOW COLORISM EXISTED IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY?
7. CAN YOU GIVE SOME EXAMPLES OF COLORISM?
8. WHO DO YOU BELIEVE BENEFITS FROM COLORISM?
9. DO YOU BELIEVE WHITE PEOPLE CAN EXPERIENCE COLORISM?
10. HAS COLORISM EVER PRESENTED ITSELF IN YOUR FAMILY DYNAMIC?
11. DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR COMMUNITY WHERE YOU EXPERIENCED COMMENTS REGARDING YOUR SKIN COLOR?
12. DESCRIBE A TIME IN YOUR IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD OR WORKPLACE WHERE YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED COLORISM?
13. HOW DOES COLORISM AFFECT YOUR RELATIONSHIPS, IN REGARD TO FRIENDSHIPS AND THE DATING WORLD.
14. ARE THEIR COMMENTS YOU EXPRESS TO YOURSELF THAT CAN SYMBOLIZE THE EFFECTS OF COLORISM? IF SO, PLEASE SHARE THESE COMMENTS OR PHRASES.
15. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PHRASES ABOUT YOUR SKIN TONE THAT YOU NEVER WANT TO HEAR AGAIN?

16. DO YOU BELIEVE COLORISM HAS AN AFFECT ON SOCIAL MEDIA? HAS THIS AFFECTED THE WAY YOU PERCEIVE YOURSELF? IF YES, PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW?

17. WHAT DO YOU FEEL NEEDS TO BE DONE TO CHANGE THE WAY AFRICAN AMERICAN INTERACT WITH ONE ANOTHER?

18. DO YOU BELIEVE COLORISM STILL EXISTS IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY? IF SO, PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR REASONING BEHIND THIS.

19. WHAT DO YOU FEEL NEEDS TO BE DONE TO CHANGE THE WAY AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN OF VARIOUS SKIN TONES INTERACT WITH ONE ANOTHER?

20. WHY DO YOU BELIEVE COLORISM IS A TOPIC NOT HIGHLY DISCUSSED?

21. DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR FINAL COMMENTS?

## INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine the factors of colorism amongst African American Women and uncover how this affects the lives of African American Women. The study is being conducted by Iris Sumo, an MSW student under the supervision of Dr. Laurel Brown, Research Supervisor of School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-Committee, California State University, San Bernardino.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the study is to examine the factors of colorism and discover how this has impacted the daily lives of African American women of various skin tones.

**DESCRIPTION:** Participants will be asked a series of questions will address experiences of colorism, effects of colorism, and social media as well as colorism regarding the dating world as well as friendships. Participants will also be given a chance to discuss how they have personally been affected by colorism. After questions are answered, participants will have a chance to ask questions or state any final comments.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences. Participants have the option to decline a response.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** It is important to note that your participation in this study is completely confidential. During this study, your name in addition to the name of the school will not be mentioned. Audio-recording of interviews will be discarded, information transcribed to research journal will also be discarded after the final paper of this study has been completed. The information transcribed will be stored in a locked research folder which will be located on a password secured laptop. The laptop will only be accessed by the researcher. Participant names will not be used, however instead, participants will be identified as numbers.

**DURATION:** As a participant of this study, you will be asked to participate in one interview that will be held for 30. The interview process will not be conducted over 45 minutes.

**AUDIO Recording:** The interview will be recorded using an audio digital recorder. This recording will be used by the researcher for the purpose of this study only. This audio recording will be erased from the digital recorder after being downloaded to a laptop computer.

I understand that my interview will be audio recorded. Yes  or No

**CONTACT:** If there are any questions, comments or concerns please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Laurel Brown, Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino at (909) 537-5501.

**RESULTS:** For results from this study please the Pfau Library Scholar works database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu>1 at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2019.

**CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:** I have read and understand the above information and agree to participate in your research study.

\_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
Place an X mark here

## DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The study you have participated in was performed to examine the contributing factors of colorism and how this has affected the lives of African American Women. Colorism is a deeply rooted issue within the African American community however this topic is rarely a discussion. This study is focused on providing awareness and creating a voice for African American woman to be heard regarding intra-racism.

I want to thank you for your time and participation in this study. Should you have any additional questions about this study please contact Dr. Laurel Brown at (909) 537-5501. Results of this study can be obtained from PFAU library scholar works database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu>) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2019.

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO**  
**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee**

Researcher(s): Iris Sumo

Proposal Title: What are the factors of colorism and how does this affect the lives of African American women?

# SW1881 \_\_\_\_\_

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

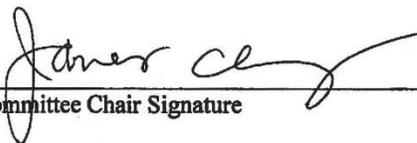
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Proposal is:

- approved  
 to be resubmitted with revisions listed below  
 to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:

- Investigators' signature missing  
 missing informed consent \_\_\_ debriefing statement  
 revisions needed in informed consent \_\_\_ debriefing  
 data collection instruments revision  
 agency approval letter missing  
 CITI missing  
 revisions in design needed (specified below)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Chair Signature

12/3/2018  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Distribution: White-Coordinator; Yellow-Supervisor; Pink-Student

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