

● Uncovering Colorism

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- Definition

- **Colorism**

Prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group

- **Shadism**

Prejudice on the basis of skin pigmentation

● Origin of Colorism in the United States

○ Colorism evolved in the United States when the enslavement of people was common practice. Slaveholders were white and typically gave preferential treatment to slaves with fairer complexion; meaning they received the more “luxurious” indoor tasks while darker-complexioned blacks, referred to as “mulattos,” were given harder outdoor laborious tasks, such as working in the fields. Slaveholders developed this practice because they frequently forced enslaved black women into sex, sparking the reproduction of light-skinned children. While these offspring were technically family, slaveholders refused to officially recognize them as their own, and instead gave them preferential treatment, building them up to be in the highest regard among

● Origin of Colorism Outside of the United States

○ Outside of the United States, colorism is often more related to class than to white supremacy. Although European colonialism has undoubtedly left its mark worldwide, colorism is said to predate contact with Europeans in Asian countries. There, the idea that white skin is superior to dark skin may derive from ruling classes typically having lighter complexions than “peasant” classes. While peasant classes were forced to work outside where they developed tans and even darker complexions, the association to the lower class became dark skin where as the elite were represented by the fair-complexion individuals who worked inside. Today in Asia, the premium on lighter-skinned complexion is a result of the social classes created on skin-tone.

● Colonialism and its Link to Colorism

○ Due to the social hierarchies formed within slave plantations, when the enslaved were finally freed, they sought to seek colonization in new territories. The light-skinned newly freed found more opportunities to colonize in predominantly white geographical areas. They were also more likely to receive skill-training and education because of their association of skin color to white individuals, and as a result were more likely to yield well-paid jobs when slavery was abolished. Darker-skinned slaves were now faced with the challenge of starting over, forming their own communities, and building their social class from the ground up with no advantages in sight.

● Stemming from Light-Skin Colorism

○ On the cusp of Western civilization, Caucasians aspired to a racial world order defining Caucasian as superior race status. Today, racial diversity is a societal theme facilitated by laws, which deems racial equality a right and racial discrimination illegal. Nevertheless, by globalization, a racial world order exists by locating light skin at the height of humanity. As pertains to the globalization of light skin, culture and social criteria are most significant considering the demands of a racist racial hierarchy. The existence of such a hierarchy by replacing racism with colorism then necessitates moving beyond race category.

● The Influence of Colorism Today

○ After extensive research I found that colorism, although stemming from history beginning decades ago, still has a huge impact today in many aspects of everyday life. Colorism is not limited to black and white; it includes all ethnicities and all cultural dynamics of those ethnicities. These areas include but are not limited in:

- Effects on self-confidence
- The perception of skin tone in society
- The role colorism holds in a workplace environment
- The influence of skin tone in artificial intelligence

● Colorism's Effect on Self-Confidence

○ Skin color determines an individual's identity and attitude about themselves, based on how they are referenced and viewed in society. Concepts of beauty stemming from literature and beyond define complexion as the main indicator of attractiveness; women tend to let this impact their self-confidence more than men. This is a result of colorism associations between dark-skinned men and women being different, where men are perceived as dangerous, while women are simply labeled unattractive. The media further contributes to this idealistic society where dark-skinned individuals see very light skinned individuals having successful experiences in advertisements, in magazines, in professional positions, and so forth. They are led to believe that "light" skin is the key to popularity, professional status, and a desirable marriage.

● Effect of Colorism in Society - Males

○ Dark-skinned blacks in the United States have lower socioeconomic status, more punitive relationships with the criminal justice system, diminished prestige, and less likelihood of holding elective office compared with their lighter counterparts. This phenomenon of colorism both occurs within the African American community and is expressed by outsiders, and most blacks are aware of it. Nevertheless, blacks' perceptions of discrimination, belief that their fates are linked, or attachment to their race almost never vary by skin color. We identify this disparity between treatment and political attitudes as "the skin color paradox."

● Effect of Colorism in Society - Males (Cont.)

○ A new area of colorism, “coconut colorism”, is colloquial reference to the Latino or Latina population. Stereotypes most recognized within the judicial system are in reference to Latinos being often seen as sketchy by law enforcement; again, typically the darker the skin tone, the more harshly the individual is treated. Nonetheless, the assimilation experience of Latinos specifically based on whether they are dark skin or light skinned has been fundamentally different. The stigmas that surround dark skin is what contributes in the victimization of Latinos trying to assimilate, especially within the dynamics of skin color in America as depicted by colorism and shadism.

● Effect of Colorism in Society - Females

Culture-based meanings and values toward skin color, associated with women's body image ideals and gender-role expectations, profoundly influence women's leisure behaviors. East Asian, Asian American, and Euro-American women revealed how leisure behaviors are tied to cultural perceptions of skin color. People from different cultural backgrounds construct meanings and values pertaining to skin color, including beauty-related standards, social class, gender roles, and lifestyles. Culture-based values, such as the preference for tanned skin among Euro-Americans and for lighter skin among East Asians, affect a wide range of daily behaviors. These behaviors include conscious as well as subtle daily decision-making regarding sun-seeking, sun-avoidance, and sun-protection behaviors; indoor versus outdoor leisure participation; and appearance modifications.

● Effect of Colorism in Society - Females (Cont.)

Light-skin tones are often described as “beauty” in which women who possess this beauty are able to advance further economically, educationally, and in social status than darker-skinned women. Lighter skin bestows privileges and even higher spousal status for African American Women. African American women have been influenced by the fact that society may tell a man success comes from it relationship with a white woman, as it is in opportunity to be recognized and respected. this plays into the psyche of an African American individual and a compromised racial identity in attributing self-worth into the physicality of a lighter-skinned partner. lighter complexioned woman feel as though they can offset the negative self-feelings associated with the word black because the word light implies “encouraging” overtones, even though it may not be who they feel they are.

● Effect of Colorism in Artificial Intelligence

Joy Buolamwini, a dark-skinned African American woman found that in testing computer recognition on people's faces, the system would not recognize her face until she put on a white mask. The system worked perfectly fine on light-skinned individuals, so she divulged into further trial of AI-powered facial recognition systems made by Microsoft, IBM, and Face++. In a sample of 1,000 faces, the systems were told to sort them by gender, but they were only overwhelmingly accurate in identifying white males. Dark-skinned females were found to be a challenge for the systems, and as skin tones of females got darker, the systems got their gender wrong half the time. The concern with AI systems now moving forward is the fear that they will be biased to skin tone and gender when serving as detectors for job screening in companies.

● Effect of Colorism in the Workplace - Males

The origin of colorism to slavery explores that dark-skinned slaves of pure african descent were given more heavy labor tasks while light-skin slaves, were given more esteemed positions. This transforms into workplace environments today, where it is attested that a darker-skinned Black male with higher levels of education and past work experience were significantly less preferred than a lighter-skinned Black male with less education and work experience, because dark-skinned Black males are more commonly linked with incivility, crime, and misconduct. This connotation that stems with skin shade impacts the ability for darker toned individuals to find trust and support in a workplace environment.

● Effect of Colorism in the Workplace - Females

Women are forced to navigate the intertwined barriers at the intersection of race and gender in a corporate America working environment. Many women revealed they were guilty of “codeswitching”, meaning they embrace the dominant culture or vernacular among certain groups such as their coworkers, and switched to a more authentic self only in more comfortable environments, almost always outside of their workplace. Many women nonetheless undergo mental strains associated with trying to fit up to a professional ideal originally created to stifle, rather than support diversity. People of color in the workplace note that they feel as though they could not escape the realities facing black people or the historical relationship between race and resource access within the nation, yet feel pressured to put that aside when they sit down at their desk. Mentors in corporations have even advised workers of color to dampen aspects of their personality in order to “fit into the culture” of the workplace.

Effect of Colorism in the Workplace - Females (Cont.)

Colorism nonetheless plays a role in dictating the level to which females are employed. Full-time opportunities offered to darker skin females were often in low-skilled service occupations. There are still significant levels of discrimination in the labor market as there is evidence of a huge difference in job offers when individuals from different ethnic groups but otherwise similar qualifications show up for hiring interviews. Lighter skinned Black women also tend to have higher salaries than darker skinned Black women with very similar credentials, based purely off of the employer's preference of appearance, reportedly based off admittance of the employer.

Why Managing Workplace Diversity is

Important

Successfully managing diversity can lead to more committed, better satisfied, better performing employees and potentially better financial performance for an organization. The importance of workplace diversity cannot be overstated in the sense that advancement as a society cannot occur without inclusivity becoming a priority. Workplace diversity fosters mutual respect among employees, however the connotation both positive and negative in regards to creating this diverse environment stems from the standards set by the employer. The preservation of quality amongst company relations encompassing diversity is vital in creating a safe and inclusive workplace.

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