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COLORISM IN AFRICAN AMERICAN
MAGAZINE PUBLICATIONS

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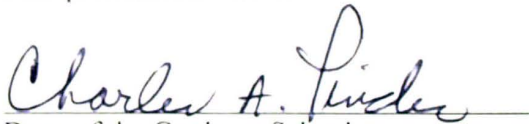


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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my brother and sister-in-law,

Athil and Camille Fahie.

My brother, Julius Fahie

And

My parents, Campbell and Lauretta Fahie,

Who provided me with endless Spiritual support, encouragement and love.

Colorism in African American
Magazine Publications

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ABSTRACT

For this study, three African American publications were studied to test the colorism theory. A content analysis was done on four different skin tones defined in the study as, China Doll, Cappuccino, Sierra, and Espresso. The data gathered were analyzed to determine the frequency of skin tones displayed on the cover page and featured stories of each magazine. This data allowed for an investigation on how skin tone affected females more than males. As predicted, results indicate that women were classified with lighter skin tones more than men. The lighter skin tone of females is consistent with the hypothesis that a higher percentage of lighter complexioned women than darker women will be featured in the magazines. Findings suggest the reoccurring standard of beauty as having Eurocentric features. Implications are discussed in the content of media imagery.

Chapter I

Entry of Colorism

Mass communications gender research on women's portrayals in the media has flourished since the 1960s, but no recent study has been conducted that examines the portrayal of African American women on the cover photograph and featured articles of magazine publications. Unlike traditional advertising studies that examine women in general, those that focus on Black women differ because they tend to explore physical appearance, skin tones, and facial features. The concentration on physical appearance specifically, the skin tone of African Americans is referred to as "colorism" (Russell, Wilson and Hall, 1992).

The colorism theory explores racism within the African American community. This theory also includes attitudes and beliefs suggesting that blacks are more attractive and more intelligent when their hair textures and facial features resemble those of a white individual (Crawford, 2004). Due to the media images that help magnify the beauty trends of society, procedures to alter "ethnic" features are on the rise. Hair straighteners, light colored contacts and skin bleaches all help women of color become more "beautiful" by portraying Caucasian features (Russell *et al.*, 1992). The entry of colorism in the United States occurred during the mixture of races, known as miscegenation, which occurred during slavery. The assumed rights of the master of slaves included sexual privileges and generations of mulattos developed as a result (O'Neal, Medlin, Walker, Jones, 2002). Mulattos, who are individuals mixed with Black and white were not categorized into a certain race so their own social class was fabricated and looked

upon more favorably than other African American looking individuals. Mulattos received privileges, which included better education, better jobs and better housing.

After slavery was abolished, skin-color continued to divide Blacks. Mulattos who were also called the “blue-vein society,” established elite groups. Organizations like the Bon Ton Society of Washington DC and the Blue Vein Society of Nashville were ignorant groups that considered their skin color to be a prestigious honor (Carter, 2005). An applicant’s admission to these groups depended solely on skin color that reflected purplish veins. The “paper bag test” was sometimes part of the admission process. The test involved placing an arm inside a brown paper bag, and if the skin on the arm was lighter than the color of the bag then an applicant may be admitted.

Progressively, magazine publications such as *Jet* and *Ebony* which catered to the African American community were used as vehicles for giving voice to Black aspirations. They advocated redress for the social, economic and political conditions to which Black Americans were subjected both during and following the period of slavery in the United States (Leslie, 1995). Articles on skin tone issues were featured in both *Ebony* and *Essence*. In the 1992 March issue of *Ebony* Magazine, the article entitled, “why skin color suddenly is a big issue again” was featured and in the April 2005 issue of *Essence* magazine the featured article, “Will I ever be Black enough? One women’s take on the color issue,” was documented. Even though these African American publications voice opinions against the color issue, the subtle display of lighter skin tones on the cover pages and featured articles contradicted what they aimed to denounce. Magazines continue to disregard the display of Black women with Afro-centric features, which is typically characterized by dark skin, kinky hair and full lips (Fears, 1998). Black

Americans with darker skin tones are correlated with lower incomes, lower levels of educational attainment, lower occupational choices and lower levels of self-esteem.

Most media studies such as Chapko (1976) and Michael Leslie's (1995) that investigated colorism have focused on advertising content and concluded that Euro-centric looking Black models were displayed more than Afro-centric looking models. This thesis differs because it examines the cover photos and featured article photographs in three different African American publications: *Ebony*, *Essence* and *Black Issues Book Review*. Additionally, this thesis will re-examine the colorism theory and its existence in African American publications. A content analysis will be used to confirm or disapprove the theory that a larger amount of lighter skin tone African Americans will be featured on cover photos and in the featured story photos of the three publications. The following hypotheses were developed for this study:

- H1: A. A higher percentage of lighter complexioned women than darker complexion women will be featured in the magazines.
- B. The percentage of light and dark complexioned males will be almost the same.
- H2: There will be a higher percentage of light complexion women than of light-complexion men.
- H3: There is a connection between occupation and skin tone of cover features.

Chapter II

Literature Review

For over a century, African American publications such as *Ebony*, *Jet*, and *Essence* have functioned as a separate social entity of American society. Over the last Century, these three African American publications have written about the undeniable progress of the Black race. For Example, Oscar Micheaux, who was an innovative filmmaker, became the first African American to produce and direct a film about African Americans. Micheaux used his film making to challenge openly the racial injustices that African Americans faced at the beginning of the 20th century: Lynching, job discrimination, interracial rape, mob violence and economic exploitation.(Butters Jr., 2000). Jackie Robinson was also an African American who helped marked the progress that Blacks were making in America. He overcame poverty and broke the color barrier in the National Baseball League, when he joined the Brooklyn Dodgers. In 1962 he became the first African American in baseball's Hall of Fame. Currently, Oprah Winfrey, who is arguably the most popular daytime television host, is also the producer of the top rated award-winning, Oprah Winfrey Show. This move from a segregated world to Blacks excelling in sports, movies and broadcasting is what these publications seek to emulate. While African American publications were displaying the progress of African Americans a silent problem was erupting because most of the Black models displayed were invariably of lighter complexions (Leslie. 1995).

The display of lighter complexion models in magazine publications supported what researchers Russell, Wilson and Hall (1992) introduced as the colorism theory, which describes the biases within a racial group based on skin pigmentation. The theory

has been mentioned in literatures throughout the 20th century by James Weldon Johnson (1995), Zora Neal Hurston (1937) and Toni Morrison (1970). Since the 1970s colorism was considered a sensitive subject, so it was never explored (Neal & Wilson, 1989) until Russell *et al* (1992) published the book, “Color Complex” which discussed colorism thoroughly. The book is one of the most profound works on the subject matter.

Before the colorism theory was examined, together African Americans of different skin tones fought for equality. During the Civil Rights movement freedom of Blackness and “Black pride” arose. Dred Scott started the Black Civil Rights Movement in 1846. Scott sued his owner John Sandford for his and his family’s freedom. The Supreme Court did not acknowledge African Americans as a part of the American people. Blacks were seen as inferior to whites but after thousands of Black soldiers died fighting for their freedom, Congress decided to pass the Civil Rights Act declaring that all persons born in the United States were citizens with full rights under the constitution, but on the basis of Dred Scott, the act was unconstitutional because Blacks were not people as “people” is used in the constitution (Perry, 1999).

Slaves became involved in the Civil Rights Movement because they were tired of being confined by their slave masters views, which mirrors the theory hegemony. Although the term hegemony was not used until Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci, slave masters continually used the theory through skin color segregation. Slaves with lighter complexions worked inside while darker slaves worked in the field. Hegemony implies a willing agreement by people to be governed by principles, rules, and laws they believe operate in their best interest, even though in actual practice they may not (Lull, 2003).

The most significant decade of the Civil Rights Movement was in the 1960s. Blacks realized that they were treated as second-class citizens and started sit-in demonstrations, along with the March on Washington, ending with King's speech, "I have a Dream." During the period of the civil rights movement, stereotypes were discredited, but much of a difference was not established concerning biases with light and dark skin tones (Golden, 2004).

Even though colorism involves light skinned Blacks rejection of darker Blacks, research has shown that Black women rather than Black men are more affected (Hughes and Hertel, 1990). When slavery was abolished in 1865 there was continued segregation within the Black community because of skin tones. The media continues to exert more bias toward women of darker skin tones. A female with a darker complexion is usually seen as a whore. In the 1988 movie "Coming to America" sisters Patrice and Lisa were viewed differently. Darker skin toned, Patrice was seen as a whore while her lighter sister Lisa, was portrayed as a classy young lady. At the end of the movie the sister with the lighter complexion, Lisa became Prince Hakkem's wife. The media continues to portray the African American beauty by displaying lighter images of women. These media images, also called "pictures in our head" according to Walter Lipmann (1922), comes from mass mediated experiences provided by popular culture.

Women in the media have commonly been observed with Euro-Centric features and several studies were done that focused on black women specifically in magazine publications. For example, in Shepherd's (1980) study, colorism is not examined, but the traditional gender research approach of looking at the roles African American women depict are examined. Black women, according to Shepherd, were portrayed in several

character extremes. In advertisements Black women were usually portrayed as obese, docile, and a dependable mother. African American women were always seen in subservient roles. The study cited two reasons for overlooking Black women: 1) Black women's physical characteristics contradicted the American ideas of beauty and 2) Black women had limited buying power due to their economic status.

Media images continue to prove the importance of physical attractiveness when it pertains to African American women. The Television show "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" changed from a darker skin toned to lighter skin toned Vivian, who played Will Smith's aunt. The video, "Beautiful" with Snoop Doggy and Pharrell also confirms the media's perception of attraction because all the women featured in the music video descriptively were light skinned, with long hair and thin facial features. Continuously, members of this group have been considered more desirable both by the African and European American communities (Okazawa, Robinson, Ward, 1987).

Schubert and Curran's (2001) study explored the stereotypical effects on candidate evaluations and the correlation of gender and attractiveness bias. The study determined if women are handicapped by gender bias as candidates for national political offices when competing with male candidates. The mock candidates for Presidency were drawn from random samples of 20 males and 20 female members of the House of Representatives to explore the operation of stereotypic bias in candidate appraisal. The samples included 8 minority males and 8 minority females. The trait attributes (competency, compassion, honesty, likeability and leadership ability), attractiveness and gender bias were observed. Male candidates were perceived more competent, likeable and with more leadership ability but women were perceived as honest. The study

concluded that women were judged more on attractiveness than male candidates. Female candidates were perceived more favorable if they were considered more attractive. Although this study did not examine the effects of colorism it determined that women are always judged on their appearance.

African American women not only encounter biases for their gender and race but also for complexion prejudices. Terkildsen (1993) copied the same study and race was considered a factor. The study concluded when subjects were made aware of race, lighter skin tones were preferred.

O'Neal *et al.* (2002) study on physical attractiveness and gender concluded differently. The study was conducted to determine if white and non-white males and females would judge targets differently based on the target's physical characteristics and gender. One hundred forty six undergraduate students volunteered to view photographs of different ethnicities; 10% African, and 35% European; they evaluated each target on his or her level of attractiveness using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least attractive and 5 the most attractive. The results showed that non-whites judged the white targets significantly more severely than they did mixed targets. Each ethnic group gave less favorable ratings to the other groups than to their own. Both African and European groups, more than any other ethnic group, rated African targets favorable. This study contradicts the theory that blacks judge each other more harshly because of skin tones (Russell *et al.*, 1992). Another study was conducted on attractiveness by Hall (1998) and the study examined the importance of skin color and attractiveness. The data was gathered from 200 randomly chosen African American students. This study explained skin color bias among people of color and sought to examine the hypothesis that there

would be no significant relationship between skin color and physical beauty. The results proved that there was a statistically significant relationship between skin color and perceptions of physical beauty. Light and dark skin tone blacks associated skin color with physical beauty.

Hill (2002) also performed a study on attractiveness using data from the national survey of Black Americans to develop and test a theory of gendered colorism among African Americans. The data was collected by Black interviewers and included data on survey respondent skin color and the interviewer's subjective assessment of the respondent's physical attractiveness. This study investigated how skin color consciously influences assessment of physical attractiveness among African American adults. The gender of skin-tone interaction is consistent with the hypothesis that African Americans perceive fair skin tone as a particularly feminine characteristic.

John Stossel (2005) of ABC News, 20/20 conducted a study on skin-deep discrimination using 60 photos of the same individuals that were altered to make the persons appear lighter or darker. The study confirmed the biases that Blacks have against darker skin Blacks. In the study actor and actresses expressed their experiences with colorism. Mel Jackson stated that light-skinned men like him, tend to get the role of the business executive and if the character is more successful or articulate he easily gets to act the part. Actress Wendy Raquel Robinson, who is of a lighter skin tone, has also noticed the difference because she is never offered the part of a crack-head or distressed mother but she often plays a successful, upscale woman.

Moreover, Atkinson (1996) in his study confirmed biases against dark skin tones but came to a different conclusion. African American and European American psychologists

were used in the study to determine if there were discrepancies of diagnoses because of skin-tones. Methods of the study involved randomly assigning African American and European American psychologists as subjects into groups that saw three different versions of a picture containing African American female targets who differed in skin tone (light, medium and dark). Every psychologist received the same case materials on their subject. Questionnaires were then completed on the subjects. Results showed regardless of whether the African American psychologists were evaluating a light, medium or dark target they rated her more physically attractive and more likely to benefit from therapy than the white psychologists, who supported more severe mental disorder diagnoses.

Studies have shown that lighter skin tone Blacks have better chances in life. Many fair skinned African Americans are unaware of how their privileged antisocial confidence is used to undermine the voices of dark-skin blacks (Ayinde, 2003). Hughes and Hertel's (1990) study demonstrated a positive correlation between lighter skin tone and a variety of chances for a better life and having a spouse with higher socioeconomic status. Keith and Herring (1991) also performed a study and found that light skin-tones were not only a predictor of socioeconomic status but also a predictor of parental socioeconomic status. Larry Crawford (2003) questioned why most homeless individuals are of darker complexions and why Americans become shocked or disturbed at the sight of a homeless person with a lighter skin tone. The study concluded that dark-skin toned African Americans continue to be at a disadvantage in society, a direct result of the prejudice and ongoing discrimination.

Bienenstock, Johnson, Stoloff, (1995) observed similar effects of dark-skin African Americans. The study concluded African Americans of darker skin tone living in Los Angeles, had reduced, by 52%, odds of employment. Age, criminal record and education were controlled in this study. African Americans in general were proven discriminated against regardless of complexions. This study also examined the fact that the bias against darker individuals occurs in other countries. Among Hispanics, dark skin is perceived as less than ideal (Hill, 2002). In Nicaragua, color influences how ordinary people interact Mestizos refer to the darker skinned Costenos (persons of African descent) in a degrading language (Hall, 1998).

To comply with culture biases, expectations of African American women to exhibit more European features were predicted. However the study performed by Bond and Cash (1992) reported that most of their African American female participants were satisfied with their skin tone and structure although there was evidence of an idealization of lighter skin. Participants believed that African American men found lighter skin toned women more attractive. Robinson and Ward (1995) also conducted a study examining the relationship between skin tone and self-esteem. Surprisingly participants described as having medium colored skin had higher self-esteem than participants described as having light and dark skin tones.

In the collaboration works of Keith and Thompson (2001), the way gender socially constructs the importance of skin tone for evaluations of self worth and competence was examined. The study determined that the negative effect on self-esteem and self-efficacy is different for both men and women. Skin-color is an important predictor of self-esteem for Black women, but not Black men. Color was found to

predict self-efficacy for Black men, but not Black women. This pattern of men and women confirmed the traditional gender expectations. The impact of skin tone on self-esteem was weaker for women from higher social class and dark skin toned women from working class had lower self-esteem scores.

The perception of lighter skin tone African Americans being considered attractive caused dark-toned women to desire lighter skin-tones, which became known as the “Bleaching Syndrome” (Hall, 1995). The study examined Jamaican residents’ reasons for bleaching due to darker skin tones on that island. The Afro-centric view perceived that Jamaicans suffered from self-hate. The study concluded that there were various reasons for skin bleaching that were not exclusive to self-hate.

A person’s self image is formed by way of social comparison. Many people compare themselves with others (including media personalities) to develop their self image (Kalodner, 1997). Advertisements continually show African American’s with European features. O’Neal and Simmons (1997) conducted a study and concluded that African American individuals in the modeling and acting professions were significantly more likely to exhibit European characteristics than Blacks in the larger population. The results indicate that popular culture selects more European than African looking individuals to display beauty, especially in the case of women.

Keenan (1996) also conducted a study that explored colorism in the media, specifically, advertising in Black and mainstream advertising and editorial photographs from 1989-1994. The study pointed out that Blacks in advertisements had lighter complexions and more Caucasian features than those in editorial photographs. Black women in ads were lighter than black men. Results revealed differences by magazine and

product type. Michael Leslie (1995) also conducted a study to investigate the changing images of Blacks in *Ebony* magazines advertisements from late 1950 to the late 1980s. The results were inconclusive due to the mixture of products and models used in the advertisements.

Chapko (1976) also conducted a study on *Ebony* ads in the early 1970s. The study revealed an increase in Black models and Black products. In 1975, research showed that models in *Ebony* advertisements from 1952 through 1968 showed trends of dark skinned features for males but Euro-centric features for females. Although males showed darker skin features, they still maintained Euro-centric features.

A similar study examined African American racial identity as reflected in the media (Van Goodlow, 1993). *Ebony*'s advertisements were analyzed from three time periods: 1950-1964, 1965-1978 and 1979-1991 totaling 41 years. The study confirmed Chapko's findings. Female models were depicted with European features more often than male models. This study differs slightly from Chapko (1976) because natural hair, which is considered an Afro-centric feature, was reflected in all three periods.

Fears (1998) also conducted a research using three publications. The study was administered to determine if news departments tend to portray black women in a more realistic manner than advertisers who illustrate models using Euro-centric looking Black models more than Afro-centric looking Black models. A random sample of issues was examined from *Jet*, *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*. *Jet* nor *Newsweek* is exclusively read by African Americans but 90% of *Jet* readers are black, 90% of *Newsweek Daily* readers are white and 80% of *New York Times* are white. Issues from the years 1965, 1975, 1985, and 1995 were selected for the study. Editorial photos were defined as news

and feature photos. The study sought to prove the significant amount of Black women with Euro-typic features represented primarily as news makers and mates of wealthy men. It was also hypothesized that a frequent usage of descriptions like “beautiful” or “lovely” to describe physical attractiveness in texts accompanying photos of Black women whose facial types resemble European features would be displayed. Both hypotheses were supported. Studies like this, confirm the media’s bias in featuring African Americans with European features over those with obvious Afro-centric features.

Chapter III

Methodology

Based on the research regarding the colorism theory in relation to skin tone, attractiveness, occupation and self-esteem, this research employed the hypotheses developed in Chapter I to identify the components analyzed in this study: That more lighter-complexioned women would be featured while there would be little difference in the number of light and dark toned men; that the percentage of lighter-complexioned women would be higher than that of men; and that occupation and skin tone would be related.

A content analysis of 30 African American publications from January to December of the year 2004 was conducted to identify the skin tones of African Americans that were viewed in the cover photos and in stories labeled by the magazine as lead and featured articles. The 12 issues each of the *Ebony*, *Essence* and the six publications of *Black Issues Book Review* were all viewed and the skin tone of the featured model and cover photo for each issue was examined using four distinct skin tone descriptions.

The definitions for the skin tones used in this study were adopted from the Elessia cosmetics website (<http://elessiacosmetics.com>). For example, China Doll was used in this study to represent the lighter skin toned Blacks. Cappuccino was used to describe African Americans of medium to light skin tones, Sierra described skin tones that are medium dark and Espresso represented Blacks of darker skin tones.

Skin tones in the magazines were compared to color samples taken from the Elessia cosmetics website. The samples are shown below:

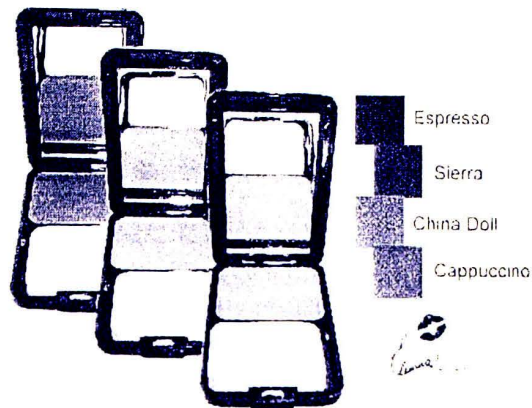


Figure 3.1- Shows the skin tones used in this study.

(elessiacosmetics.com)

All three publications examined in this study aim to represent and inform the African American community in different ways. The *Ebony* publication was founded in 1945 at the end of World War II and its main emphasis has been on the presentation of the positive side of African American achievement. It has been the biggest-selling Black magazine in the world for 59 straight years and it is still considered the #1 in circulation. *Ebony* has also showcased the negative side of the development of Blacks in American life, like the Emmett Till Lynching and the Birmingham brutalities. It is the only magazine that covers the whole Black family which includes: males, females, teenagers, ministers, entertainers and entrepreneurs (Ebony, 2000).

The Hollingsworth Group, Inc. founded *Essence* magazine in 1968 and the initial developers of the magazine were Jonathan Blount, Edward Lewis and Cecil Hollingsworth. *Essence* aims to promote the political and economical progress and the beauty of African American skin-tones. The magazine publication is dedicated to serving

the interest of African American women by staying faithful to their intelligence, humanity, beauty and power (Lewis, 1990).

Black Issues Book Review magazine is the most recent of the three publications that were examined. The magazine is currently in its sixth year of circulation. It is a Virginia based bi-monthly magazine that was started in 1999. The publication's main focus is to review house and self-published books. It is the only large circulation forum solely devoted to covering both fiction and non-fiction books written by Black authors. *Black Issues Book Review* magazine is not only dedicated to promoting new books but conveys how writing can be intertwined with any occupation (Who we are, 2005). India Arie, the singer and songwriter, was featured on the September-October cover and she explained how songwriting is the art of telling a story. Although this publication is not as popular when compared to *Essence* and *Ebony* it was used in this study to explore the differences in skin tones of celebrities in private arenas and those in public sectors of society.

In addition to skin tone, gender and occupation of each photograph subject were coded. Since the photograph subjects were all well-known personalities, gender and occupation were known by the coders.

Chapter IV

Results

The gathered data were then analyzed in terms of qualitative research, and color variations to determine the frequency of certain skin-tones promoted on the covers and featured stories of magazine articles. The summary of each publication is shown in the appendix but the summarized graphs are shown below:

Table 4.1 Gender and Skin-Tone Cross Tabulation for *Ebony*

Skin-Tone	Male	Female	Total
China Doll	2	6	8
Cappuccino	5	6	11
Sierra	4	0	4
Espresso	0	0	0
Total	11	12	23

Table 4.1 shows that women are concentrated in the lighter skin tones, China Doll and Cappuccino, while men are concentrated in the medium tones, Cappuccino and Sierra.

Table 4.2 Gender and Skin-Tone Cross Tabulation for *Black Issues Book Review*

Skin-Tone	Male	Female	Total
China Doll		1	1
Cappuccino	2		2
Sierra	3	4	7
Espresso			
Total	5	5	10

In Table 4.2, both genders are more heavily represented in the medium skin-tone categories.

Table 4.3 Gender and Skin-Tone Cross Tabulation for *Essence* Magazines

Skin-Tone	Male	Female	Total
China Doll	2	6	8
Cappuccino	1	8	9
Sierra	5	3	8
Espresso	0	0	0
Total	8	15	23

In *Essence* magazine the female subjects tend to be lighter to medium tones while the males were more likely to have medium tones.

Table 4.4 Gender and Skin-Tone Cross Tabulation for *Essence*, *Ebony*, *Black Issues Book Review*

Skin Tone	Male	Female	Total
China Doll	4	13	17
Cappuccino	8	12	20
Sierra	12	7	19
Espresso	0	0	0
Total	24	35	59

In Table 4.4, a summary of all three magazines shows males evenly split between lighter and darker skin tones while females clustered in the lighter-toned categories.

Table 4.5 Cross-Tabulation of Occupation and skin-Tone for all magazines.

Skin-Tone	Public (singer, actor model)	Private (author, banker poet)	
China Doll	16	1	17
Cappuccino	18	2	20
Sierra	14	5	19
Espresso	0	0	0

Table 4.5 shows occupation as it relates to skin-tone in all three magazines. Occupation is divided between those who make their living in the public eye (actor, singer, model) and those who work out of the public eye (author, banker, poet).

Thus, Table 4.4 shows support for H1a that a higher percentage of lighter complexioned women than darker complexion women will be featured in the magazines.

Data from this table also shows support for H1b that the percentage of light and dark complexioned males will be almost the same. With 80% of the women falling into the lighter skin-tone categories and 50% of the men falling into these two categories, Table 4.4 shows support for Hypotheses 2 --higher percentage of light complexion women than of light complexioned men would be displayed. Table 4.5 shows support for H3 -- there would be a connection between occupation and skin tone. Seventy percent of those who earn their living in the public eye fell into the lighter skin-tone categories and 63% of those in more private occupations fell into the darker skin tones.

Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to re-examine the colorism theory and its existence in African American magazine publications. *Ebony*, *Essence* and *Black Issues Book Review* were all investigated. Most studies concluded that the colorism theory is still in existence because Euro-centric looking models are more dominant in black publications than Afro-centric looking models. The women in these previous studies usually displayed a lighter skin tone than the male counterparts, “this is what I see when I skim the pages of *Ebony* and *Jet*, when I watch BET: The dark skinned male power elite and their light-skinned trophy wives” (Golden, 2004).

Specifically, this study investigated the black publications and the roles of colorism addressed in each issue. Through the qualitative analysis of materials, controlled by variables of the month, gender, occupation and skin tone of subjects, the potential display of the colorism theory was narrated.

The evidence of the present study regarding colorism in black publications was confirmed but also contradicted what previous studies proved. I predicted in Hypothesis 1-A that China Doll skin tones would outnumber all other skin tones but the results were different. The other three Hypothesis were not proven because darker males were viewed more often than lighter males. medium skin tone females were displayed similarly to medium complexion males, and occupation was not a predictor of subjects examined because most of the publications only featured celebrities in the African American community.

Previous studies have found that blacks in publications had lighter complexions and black women were lighter than black men (Kennan, 1996), which was proven in

Hypothesis 2 of this study. In contrast, Hypothesis 1 reflected different results because the lighter complexions were displayed less than light to medium complexions, which suggest that bias against darker skinned African Americans has been on the decline. Almost every study conducted over the last 20 years revealed that female models, more likely than male models, displayed more Eurocentric features which included having a lighter skin tone (van Goodlow, 1993). The occupations of lighter skin toned subjects have always been of a higher social class than darker blacks. The only confirmed correlation between subjects of light and dark skin tones having a better occupation was displayed in the *Black Issues Book Review* which usually featured African Americans in the private sector as authors, bankers, poets) of society. This publication displayed an exceeding amount of darker skin tones compared to *Ebony* and *Essence*.

The current study contributes to the limited amount of research examined on colorism. Although the results, showcases the progress currently being made in Black publications, the experiment has limitations and more work is always needed in this academic area. Two limitations of this study include the small sample size of the popular magazines that were tested and the small sample size of magazines that catered to writers and poets. A study should be done to examine three consecutive years of each publication to test the hypothesis confirmed in this study.

The review of *Ebony*, *Essence*, and *Black Issues Book Review*, confirmed a publication strategy that is based on the politics of skin color among African Americans. Historically, this has been the case, specifically in the 19th century when color was crucial to the characterizations of Blacks. especially women (Russell, *et al.*, 1992). Although progress has been made in the 21st century, the magazine publications

examined for this study proved how much advancement still needs to be accomplished. In the subsequent description of each publication's cover page and featured story, the models skin-tones are stated. The results for the evaluation of the black publications were satisfactory.

Ebony

In the January issue the singer, Alicia Keys who for the purpose of this study has a skin tone classification of China Doll, is featured on the cover page and in the featured story. Key's is biracial and has keen Caucasian features. In the February issue of *Ebony*, the top four couples of the year were displayed both on the cover page and as the featured story. Beyonce' is a singer, described as having a China Doll complexion and her male companion, Jay-Z is also a popular rapper and classified as having a Sierra complexion. P. Diddy and his counterpart Kim Porter is also one of the famous couples featured on the cover page. The model, Porter is described as cappuccino and P.Diddy who is a rapper and producer is described as having a Sierra skin tone. The China doll skin toned singer Sole', and her Cappuccino skin toned husband, Ginuwine are featured. The last couple featured in the February issue of *Ebony* was the singer Janet Jackson and boyfriend Jermaine Dupri, classified respectively as Cappuccino and Sierra skin-tones.

The March issue featured the singer Whitney Houston, who has a Cappuccino complexion. In the April issue the singer Janet Jackson displayed a Cappuccino skin-tone. The model Tyra Banks was featured in the May issue and described as having a China doll skin-tone. The Cappuccino skin tone singer, Usher was featured in the June Issue. In July, the three male actors featured were Keith Hamilton Cobb, Sean Patrick

and Henry Simmons. Each actor's skin-tone was classified respectively as China Doll, Sierra and Cappuccino.

The August issue featured Halle Berry who was characterized as having a China Doll skin tone. In September the Cappuccino skin-tone actress, Jada Pinkett-Smith was featured and then in October the acting couple Boris Kodjoe who has a Cappuccino skin tone and Nicole Parker with a China Doll skin tone was featured. In November male actor, Jamie Foxx was featured and classified with a Cappuccino skin tone. The television personality, Star Jones with her china-doll complexion was featured in the last issue of the year with Cappuccino skin-tone fiancé, Al Reynolds who is a wall-street banker. The summary of the female skin tones featured in the 2004 issues of the *Ebony* publication was six China doll and six Cappuccino complexions. The male skin tones displayed included two China Dolls, five Cappuccino and four Sierra complexions.

Essence

In the January issue of the *Essence* publication, the Cappuccino skin colored model, Nicola Vassel and the Sierra complexion singer Marcy Gray were featured. Singer Mary J. Blidge and her producer husband Kendu Issacs were both classified as having a Cappuccino complexion in the February issue. In March the China-Doll skin-tone rapper, Eve was featured. The April issue featured six male actors with different skin tone shades. Idris Elba, Carl Lumby, Delroy Lindo and Blair Underwood were all characterized with Sierra skin tones. Michael Ealy and Mathew St. Patrick both had China-Doll skin tones. In the May issue the China Doll complexioned singer Diana Ross and actress, daughter Tracee Ellis Ross were featured. Singers Beyoncé, Janet Jackson, and Mary J. Blidge were featured in the June issue. Beyoncé's skin tone was classified as

China Doll. Janet Jackson and Mary J. Blidge both have Cappuccino skin tones. Comedian and actress, Monique was featured in the July issue and classified as Sierra skin-toned. Neo-soul singer Jill Scott, was on the August issue and her skin tone was classified as Cappuccino.

In the September issue, Liya Kebede and Iman were featured with China doll and Cappuccino skin tones. In October and November, singer, Anita Baker and actor Jamie Foxx were classified with Cappuccino complexions. Cappuccino skin toned Actresses Regina King and Kerry Washington were also featured with Jamie Foxx in the November issue. The December issue featured actress Nia long, described with a China Doll complexion. The summarized skin-tones in the Essence 2004 issue for females included six Cappuccino, six China Dolls and three Sierra complexions. Skin tone classification for the males included one Cappuccino, two China Dolls and Five Sierra's.

Black Issues Book Review

In the six publications for 2004 the female models featured classifications involved eleven China Doll and four sierra skin tones. The featured males were classified as having two Cappuccinos and three Sierra complexions. In the January and February issue actor Blair Underwood's skin tone was classified as Sierra. The March and April feature story included nine poets, however only five were African Americans. The one female and two male poets were classified as having sierra complexions and one male poet was characterized with a Cappuccino skin tone. The May and June issue featured Cappuccino skin-toned television-personality Tavis Smiley. The China doll complexioned Aisha Tyler, who is an actress and comedian was featured in the July-

August issue. The September-October, November-December issues featured sierra skin toned singer India Arie and Arthur Susan L. Taylor.

Results for the evaluations of colorism in Black publications were satisfactory.

Hypothesis 1A: *More lighter complexion women than darker complexion women will be featured in the magazines.* The Hypothesis was supported because there were only three females in *Essence*, 0 in *Ebony* and 4 in *Black Issues Book Review* described as having darker skin tones.

Hypothesis 1B: *The number of light and dark complexioned men will be almost the same.* The darkest skin tone, Espresso was not displayed on any cover photo in the three publications. The medium to dark skin-tone, Sierra described 4 males in *Ebony*, 9 males in *Essence* and 3 males in *Black Issues Book Review*. The lighter skin tone males defined as China Doll were displayed two times in *Ebony*, 2 in *Essence* and 0 in *Black Issues Book Review*. The lighter to medium skin tone males define as Cappuccino were two for *Black Issues Book Review*, 1 for *essence* and 5 for *Ebony*. Thus, the hypothesis was not supported because the medium dark skin tones males almost doubled the amount of lighter skin-tones represented in each publication.

Hypothesis 2: *There will be a higher percentage of light complexion women than of light complexioned men.* The hypothesis was supported because in *Ebony* the skin tone description China Doll, classified 6 females and only 2 males. The medium to light skin tone Cappuccino described 7 females and 5 males. *Essence* results determined that 6 females and 2 males had China Doll complexions and 8 females and 1 male were Cappuccino skin toned. In the *Black Issues Book Review* 1 China Doll were displayed for

the females and 0 for males. There were 2 displays of Cappuccino complexions for males and 0 for the females.

Hypothesis 3: *There is a connection between occupation and skin tone of the featured stories.* The results for this hypothesis is inconclusive because *Ebony* and *Essence* only features current celebrities but *Black Issues Book Review* has a wider spectrum of featured guests assorted from singers to poets. In *Black Issues Book Review*, more Sierra skin tone females than the other two publications were displayed. Occupationally, the females represented 2 poets, singer and Arthur. Poets and authors are less visible in the media than models, singers and rappers.

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Appendix A

Ebony Magazine

Month	Gender	Occupation	Skin-Tone
January	Female (Alicia Keys)	Singer	China Doll
February	Female (Beyonce')	Singer	China Doll
	Male (Jay-Z)	Rapper	Sierra
	Male (P-Diddy)	Rapper	Sierra
	Female (Kim Porter)	Model	Cappuccino
	Male (Ginuwine)	Singer	Cappuccino
	Female (Sole')	Singer	China Doll
	Female (Janet Jackson)	Singer	Cappuccino
	Male (Jermaine Dupri)	Rapper	Sierra
March	Female (Whitney Houston)	Singer	Cappuccino
April	Female (Janet Jackson)	Singer	Cappuccino
May	Female (Tyra Banks)	Model	China Doll
June	Male (Usher)	Singer	Cappuccino
July	Male (Keith Hamilton Cobb)	Actor	China Doll
	Male (Sean Patrick Thomas)	Actor	Sierra
	Male (Henry Simmons)	Actor	Cappuccino
August	Female (Halle Berry)	Actor	China Doll
September	Female (Jada Pinkett-Smith)	Actor	Cappuccino
October	Male (Boris Kodjoe)	Actor	Cappuccino
	Female (Nicole Parker)	Actor	China Doll
November	Male (Jamie Foxx)	Actor	Cappuccino
December	Female (Star Jones)	Television	Cappuccino
	Male (Al Reynolds)	Personality Wall street Banker	China Doll

Appendix B

Black Issues Book Review

Month	Gender	Occupation	Skin-Tone
January-February	Male (Blair Underwood)	Actor	Sierra
March-April	5 African Americans 3 Males, 2 Females	Poets	2 males Sierra 1 male Cappuccino 2 females Sierra
May-June	Male (Tavis Smiley)	Television Personality	Cappuccino
July-August	Female (Aisha Tyler)	Actress-Comedian	China Doll
September-October	Female (India-Arie)	Singer	Sierra
November-December	Female (Susan L. Taylor)	Author	Sierra

Appendix C

Essence Magazine:

Month	Gender/Feature Story	Occupation	Skin Tone
January	Female (Nicola Vassel) Female/Feature Story (Marcy Gray)	Model Singer	Cappuccino Sierra
February	Female (Mary J. Blidge) Male (Kedu Issacs)	Singer Producer	Cappuccino Cappuccino
March	Female (Eve)	Rapper	China Doll
April	Male (Idris Elba) Male (Carl Lumby) Male (Delroy Lindo) Male (Blair Underwood) Male (Michael Ealy) Male (Matthew St. Patrick)	Actor Actor Actor Actor Actor Actor	Sierra Sierra Sierra Sierra China Doll China Doll
May	Female (Diana Ross) Female (Tracee Ellis Ross)	Singer Actor	China Doll China Doll
June	Male (Beyonce')	Singer	China Doll
July	Female (Monique)	Comedian	Sierra
August	Female (Jill Scott)	Singer	Cappuccino
September	Female (Liya Kebede) Feature Story-Female (Iman)	Model Model	China Doll Cappuccino
October	Female (Anita Baker)	Singer	Sierra
November	Female (Jamie Foxx) Female (Regina King) Female (Kerry Washington)	Actor Actor Actor	Sierra Cappuccino Cappuccino
December	Female (Nia Long)	Actor	China Doll