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Claretta Daniels
Echoes of Racism: An Exploration into Skin Color Bias within the African American Community

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to ascertain the kinds of messages that African Americans are being exposed to that introduce them to the existence and reality of skin color bias within the African American community. This included identifying the time frame, source, and nature of those exposures as well as exploring the efforts African Americans have made to try to protect younger generations of African Americans from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community.

This study used a descriptive, fixed method research design in the form of an online survey instrument that contained both a quantitative and a qualitative section. The 93 participants in this study identified themselves and their parenting caregivers as African American and as living only in the continental United States from birth through age 18.

Participant responses point to teasing, ridicule, mistreatment, lighter-skin privilege, and the replication of skin color bias within African American families. When these responses are combined with historical research on skin color bias, intergenerational transmission of this phenomenon is strongly suggested. Forty-nine percent of participants felt at some point protectively socialized against the impact of intra-group skin color bias. Education and active management of their environments were two of the most frequently mentioned efforts that were made on their behalf.

Implications for African Americans and mental health clinicians as well as study limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed.

ECHOES OF RACISM:

AN EXPLORATION INTO SKIN COLOR BIAS

WITHIN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

Claretta Daniels

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Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

2009

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The modernized concept of race was socially constructed to support white supremacy, which is more often euphemistically referred to as racism. When the concept of race, along with the white supremacist ideologies it was socially constructed to support, was combined with (a) the brutal enslavement of Africans and their descendants, (b) the conception of, and publicly vigorous opposition to, miscegenation, and (c) the social construction of the rule of hypodescent, many terrible results were produced. These results included the activation, in the United States, of a multi-tiered, skin color based ranking system used to judge physical attractiveness as well as inherent value and worth.

The harmful internalization by African Americans of this white supremacist, skin color based ranking system has long been an issue that many in the African American community have been hesitant to discuss for fear that the ensuing discourse might be misunderstood or misused by the dominating racial group (Davis, Daniels, & See, 1998). And yet, the issue has very much continued to exist bringing with it intra-group divisiveness and countless experiences of pain and rejection for many African American adults and children. This issue has also had an equally significant impact on the families of which these individuals are a part.

Therefore, this study was conducted to add to the preexisting body of literature regarding skin color bias as well as encourage positive and constructive discourse on this issue. In an effort to investigate this issue, this study utilized a descriptive fixed method

research design to ascertain the kinds of messages that African Americans have been exposed to that introduced them to the existence and reality of skin color bias *within* the African American community. This included (a) identifying the time frame during which participants were first exposed to skin color bias from within the African American community, (b) identifying the source (whether from parenting caregivers, extended family, siblings, peers, neighbors, teachers, or from some other source), (c) exploring the nature of those exposures, and (d) exploring the efforts African American parenting caregivers and other African Americans have made to try to protect younger generations of African Americans from the impact of skin color bias coming from within the African American community.

The Literature Review addresses the following important concepts as they relate to this study: the social construction of race; miscegenation, hypodescent, and their impact on the African American community; the theoretical concept of internalized oppression (with a specific focus on internalized white supremacy); and the practical and clinical significance of skin color bias. It also addresses research that is relevant for this study. While research is available that seeks to assess the impact of skin color differences within the African American community (cf. Davis et al., 1998; Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Keith & Herring, 1991; Parrish, 1946; Thompson, M. S., & Keith, 2001; Wade, 1996; Wade & Bielitz, 2005), there is not a large body of literature that addresses the transmission of skin color bias. Therefore, the research discussed will address the subtopics of skin color preferences and skin color advantage.

Motivation for study of this topic blossomed from a review of RoseMarie Pérez Foster's (1998) article entitled *The clinician's cultural countertransference: The*

psychodynamics of culturally competent practice. In it, she talked as a clinician about personally avoiding the exploration of any "painful issues about color discrimination with a dark-skinned client" (p. 261). She further went on to talk about realizing that "'silencing' her clients was [her] way of avoiding the double-edged guilt and pride of [her] own racial experience: growing up as the lightest skinned child in a darker-skinned Caribbean family" (p. 261). Reading this caused me to reflect on my personal experience as the darker-skinned of two siblings and how messages from my parenting caregivers influenced my understanding of skin color as well as my view of myself. This, in conjunction with other anecdotal evidence of the potential difficulties that arise related to skin color bias in African Americanfamilies, led me to want to study this topic.

This study was conducted, in part, to encourage reflection, discourse, and even focused action within the African American community and among the mental health clinicians who work with this population. In doing so, this study will not only have added to the body of knowledge available to the African American community, educators, and the mental health profession but will also have improved the possibilities for empathic attunement and understanding in both the therapeutic dyad and in the area of social justice.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review comprises five major sections bounded by this introduction and a summary. It begins with two sections that take a historical look at the social construction of race as well as miscegenation, hypodescent, and their impact. From there, the review continues with three sections that discuss research studies related to (a) skin color bias and skin color advantage, (b) this study's theoretical framework of internalized white supremacy (which, in the literature, is more commonly referred to as internalized racism), and (c) the practical and clinical significance of skin color bias within the African American community. This chapter ends with a summary of this chapter and a formal statement of purpose for this study.

The Social Construction of Race: An Overview

The idea of race has long been used to create groupings of people (Dalal, 2002) and to differentiate between them along various lines. The idea of race, however, is just that – an idea. And the lines drawn to distinguish one so-called race of people from another are arbitrary and depend on both the social perceptions as well as the conscious and unconscious motives of those doing the drawing (Jones, C. P., 2001; Moskowitz, 1999; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Stanfield, 1993; Weisglass, 2001; Witzig, 1996). In fact, science has proven that there is no biological or genetic evidence supporting the idea of race (Goodman, 2000; Graves, 2004; Jablonski, 2004; Takeuchi & Williams, 2003; Winant, 2000; Witzig, 1996). Human beings actually "vary only slightly at the DNA

level and … only a small proportion of this variation separates continental populations" (Jorde & Wooding, 2004, p. S28; see also Witzig, 1996).

What remains, then, is something that is socially constructed and does not really exist (Jablonski, 2004; Witzig, 1996). And yet, this "thing" that does not really exist continues to persist and produce real enough effects (Dalal, 2002; Goodman, 2000). How can this be? This enigma is resolved when one comes to understand that the idea of race was created simultaneously with racism. In other words, it was created for a particular use. That use was the need for continued justification of the subjugation of the "other." In order to do that, a means was needed for defining the "other."

Early Use of the Word Race

One of the earliest written uses of the word race appeared in the English language in 1508 in a poem written by William Dunbar (Banton, 1987). This, however, was at least 250 years before "scientific" support for the idea of race, as we commonly understand it today, was popularized. In the sixteenth century, the word race was typically used in reference to a person's lineage (Banton, 1987) and tended to be infrequently used (Dalal, 2002). However, its use was infrequent because other means were available for defining the "other." In this period, there continued to be general reliance on categorization of "the Negro" and various "others" as beasts who were not admitted "into the category of humankind" (Dalal, 2002, p.13). However, over time, as this kind of split became less and less justifiable, the idea of race arose in a more formally classified way thus allowing "the Negro" and various "others" to become defined as different *types* of humans in order to maintain a distinct definition of "other" (Dalal, 2002). When viewing the development of the idea of race from this perspective, one can see that the use of science to divide

human beings into races was merely an attempt to maintain, through a different means, justification for the continued subjugation of others (Dalal, 2002).

Systems of Classification

In 1758, Carl Linnaeus became the first to make "a formal attempt to classify and differentiate the types of humankind" (Dalal, 2002, p.16). Linnaeus presented four main varieties, or subsets, of the human species: (a) Copper-coloured/Red, choleric, erect. *American* (paints himself, regulated by customs); (b) Fair/White, sanguine, brawny/muscular. *European* (covered by close vestments, governed by laws); (c) Sooty/Pale Yellow, melancholy, rigid/stiff. *Asian* (covered with loose garments, governed by opinions); and (d) Black, phlegmatic, relaxed. *African* (anoints himself with grease, governed by caprice) (Dalal, 2002; Gould, 1996).

Even though Linnaeus used the term variety instead of race, Dalal (2002) noted that Linnaeus included the following in his descriptions: "physical attributes (what some call race), mode of dress (what some call culture), and also character types (what some would call psychology)" (2002, p. 17). He also used color as one of the primary ways of differentiating between these varieties (Dalal, 2002). Thus "in the very first of the formal attempts at classification, all the elements colour, internal character, physical type and culture are all firmly bound together and made integral to each other" (p. 17). Though Linnaeus and others who came after him were merely formalizing and organizing the prevailing beliefs of their era (Dalal, 2002; Witzig, 1996), "it is remarkable how similar the concept and categories of race remain today" (Witzig, 1996, p. 675).

There were other influential naturalists who came after Linnaeus. These include George Cuvier who, in 1817, proposed a division of human beings into three major races

in the order of white, yellow, and black (Dalal, 2002), and Carl Gustav Carus who, also in the 19th century, proposed a different system that classified people based on their position to the sun. His was a hierarchical system of four races that held whites, or Day People, in the highest position and blacks, or Night People, at the lowest (Banton, 1987).

But the most influential racial classification system was proposed by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, a German naturalist. His original system, created in 1775, had four categories that were plainly adopted from Linnaeus' system although Blumenbach is the one responsible for introducing the term Caucasian into the race lexicon. He borrowed this term from a mountain range in Russia where he considered the most beautiful people to live. Because of his perception of their beauty, Blumenbach also believed that humans had first been created in this region. He, thus, took the name of this small group of people and applied it to all Europeans which was also the group to which he belonged (Gould, 1996).

In 1795, however, in order to provide geometrical balance to a system, and with a clear ideal in mind, Blumenbach separated out the Malay variety from the Asian category. This fifth category acted as an intermediary group between the categories labeled Caucasian and African and now allowed Blumenbach's system to move out in two different directions from a Caucasian ideal (most attractive) to the most degenerate (least attractive) (Gould, 1996) as shown in Figure 1 (Blumenbach, 1865, pp. 264-265). However, the resulting five-race taxonomy also created a hierarchy of worth that would come to be applied to much more than just attractiveness or beauty.

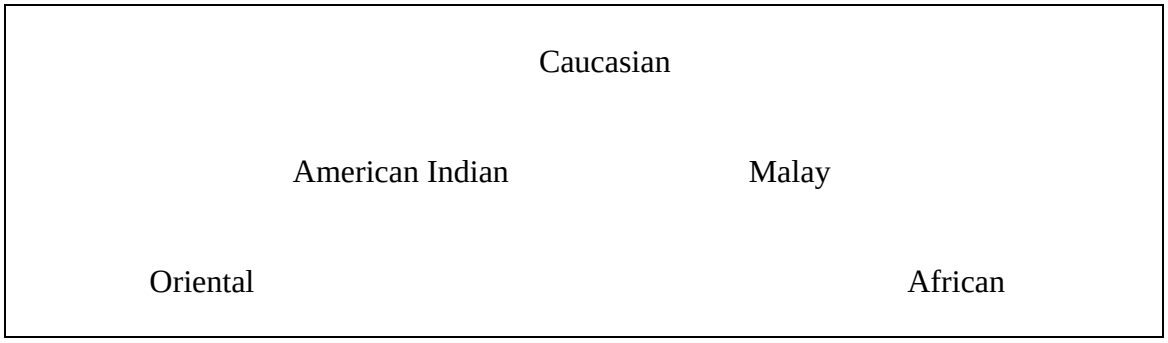

Figure 1. Blumenbach's Racial Classification System of Supposed Degeneration from the Caucasian Race.

Note. Created from *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach* (R. Bendyshe, Trans., pp. 264-265), by J. F. Blumenbach, 1865, London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green. Text is out of copyright.

The Merger of Classification Systems

Prior to the advent of evolutionism in 1859 based on Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, systems of racial hierarchy were loosely based on the Bible and fell into two main categories – monogenism and polygenism. Monogenism was the idea that all races degenerated from the perfection of Adam and Eve in Eden (Gould, 1996) and that the range in skin colors from white to yellow to brown and black resulted from differing degrees of rapid degeneration (Dalal, 2002).

Polygenists, on the other hand, labeled "scripture as allegorical and held that human races were separate biological species, the descendants of different Adams" (Gould, 1996, p. 71). Gould further pointed out that this view "of blacks as a separate and unequal species had obvious appeal as an argument for slavery" (Gould, 1996, p. 101). And yet it came at too high a price for most proponents of slavery in the United States since most of them believed in the Bible to one degree or another. So, instead, they continued to rely on the idea of the curse of Ham applying to all his offspring, instead of just Canaan, as sufficient grounds for the enslavement of Africans and their descendants (Gould, 1996).

However, the introduction of the theory of evolution squelched the long-standing feud between monogenists and polygenists by presenting an argument that satisfied the racism in each of their arguments.

> The monogenists continued to construct linear hierarchies of races according to mental and moral worth; the polygenists now admitted a common ancestry in the prehistoric mists, but affirmed that races had been separate long enough to evolve major inherited differences in talent and intelligence. (Gould, 1996, p. 105)

When the theory of evolution subsumed these two lines of thought and was then combined with the newly emerging devotion to quantification -- "the faith that rigorous measurement could guarantee irrefutable precision" -- "an unholy alliance" was formed that served to create "the first powerful theory of 'scientific' racism" (Gould 1996, p. 106). Remnants of this belief system are still embedded in our society and believed to be true despite strong evidence to the contrary (Goodman, 2000; Jorde & Wooding, 2004; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Takeuchi & Gage, 2003; Winant, 2000; Witzig, 1996).

The progression, then, of these key theories, among others, laid the groundwork for efforts made by American scientists of European descent during the era of the American Revolution. It was at this time that they sought to find a way to objectively prove that non-whites were inferior (Graves, 2004) and resolve the contradiction between a natural right to freedom and the fact of slavery (Fields, 2001).

The resulting racial ideology that was purported to be scientifically proven also served to lock in place what many Americans of European descent, referred to as whites, had long believed especially during the slavery era – that individuals of African descent, referred to as blacks, and all other non-whites, were inferior to whites (Graves, 2004). But, while it may have taken a significant period of time for whites to supposedly prove,

scientifically, that blacks were inferior to whites, they already had a long history in the United States of affording privileged status to slaves who were considered less black than others based on skin color and other phenotypical characteristics. The differences that made the creation of a skin color hierarchy possible among the enslaved population was a result of miscegenation -- a practice privately engaged in by many white male slave owners but publicly opposed by the majority of whites (Hickman, 1997; Hollinger, 2003; Jones, T., 2000).

The Impact of Miscegenation and Hypodescent

This vigorous opposition from whites came about, not out of concern for the enslaved, but in order to strengthen support for the practice of enslaving others along the socially constructed lines of race. As a result, race mixing was forcefully discouraged and antimiscegenation laws were passed that pronounced sex between whites and blacks to be evil and that equated sex with blacks to bestiality (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). However, in spite of this, there was and continued to be a long history of "sexual association between white men and Negro women" that existed throughout the slavery era (Davis et al., 1998, p. 71) and that Franklin (2000) and Frazier (1957/1997, 2001) suggest "ranged from heinous and savage rape of the Negro women, to [their] voluntary surrender" (Davis et al., 1998, p. 71).

While both Franklin (2000) and Frazier (1957/1997, 2001) suggested the possibility of voluntary surrender, Franklin (2000) also noted "the vulnerability of [enslaved] women to sexual abuse by masters" (p. 67). In addition, Karenga (1993) clearly stated that enslaved women were subjected to "sexual abuse and brutality," including "rape," and he described an environment in which these women were

"subjected to the sexual lust and exploitation of the master and his family" (p. 123; cf. Joyner, 1991). Further, Russell et al. (1992) noted that

> rape was a fact of life on the plantations. At any time and in any place, female slaves were subject to the drunken or abusive sexual advances of a master, an overseer, a neighbor, or a master's son. Few Black women reached the age of sixteen without having been molested by a White male. (p. 18)

Additionally,

> although a few mulatto slaves…may have led richer and more comfortable lives as a result of … concubinage, a much greater number of female slaves suffered horribly from constant and brutal sexual exploitation. Physical and psychic wounds were inflicted on these Black women from which many never recovered. (p. 21)

Moreover, Jacobs (1861/1987) – herself a formerly enslaved woman – and White (1999) provided additional depth of perspective to the possibility of "voluntary surrender" by an enslaved woman to someone who called himself her master and held the power of life, death, cruelty, and torture over her. Jacobs considered enslavement to be "far more terrible for women" than for men because "superadded to the burden common to all, *they* have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own" (p. 77). When enslaved women were actually presented with a choice, White noted that they were often forced to choose between sex with their white slaveholder "and the worst experiences that slavery had to offer" (p.34). The "worst … that slavery had to offer" (White, 1999, p. 34) often included vicious and merciless whippings (Frazier, 2001; White, 1991), "harm to her loved ones" (White, 1991, p. 103), or sale away from known surroundings and social contacts – possibly into a worse circumstance on another plantation (White, 1991, 1999). That "many chose the former" (White, 1999, p. 34) could hardly be described as "voluntary surrender."

Outside of those who were enslaved, there was relatively little concern about the nature of the sexual association. However, there was widespread concern among whites about the status of the light brown skinned offspring produced by these unions between those who engaged in slave holding and those who were enslaved. These offspring were often referred to as mulattoes and the upper and lower regions of the South responded differently to their increasing numbers.

The upper South responded by introducing a "one-drop rule" that classified any persons as Negro, regardless of their genetic makeup, as long as they had one drop of African blood. This rule effectively placed mulattoes on the same "bottom rung of the social hierarchy with unmixed Negroes" (Russell et al., 1992, p. 14) and is a form of hypodescent (Hickman, 1997; Hollinger, 2003; Nelson, 1986; Safa, 1998). Even today, hypodescent is considered the norm in the United States. But it was the economic and "property interests of slaveholders" (Hollinger, 2003, p. 1369) that forged and solidified this principle in the United States (Hollinger, 2003; Nelson, 1986). As a result of this rule, "children begotten upon [enslaved] women by their owners or by other white men would grow up as slaves, adding to the property of the owners of the women" (Hollinger, 2003, p. 1369). And subsequent laws against miscegenation served to "make it difficult for the children of such unions to achieve any right to inheritance" (Hollinger, 2003, p. 1379).

This rule also spread to the North and continued to be accepted even after slavery was no longer legal there. However, the lower South instead implemented a three-tiered system that designated "mulattoes… as a buffer class between Whites and Blacks" (Russell et al., 1992, p. 15). And, according to Frazier (1957, 1957/1997), this buffer

class had “a more privileged existence than their ‘pure black’ counterparts” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 760) “on the plantation” (Davis et al., 1998, p. 72). These privileges included (a) “more prestigious and socially desirable service positions” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 762; see also Blackwell, 1975; Franklin, 2000; Russell et al., 1992), (b) the opportunity to receive “training for skilled occupations” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 762; see also Frazier, 1957, 1957/1997; Landry, 1987); (c) “the opportunity to work as a free laborer, save money, and purchase one’s freedom” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 762; see also Blackwell, 1975), (d) “better food, clothing and shelter” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 762; see also Franklin, 2000), (e) exposure to “the cultural views and practices…of the larger society” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 762; see also Blackwell, 1975; Frazier, 1957; Russell et al., 1992), and, occasionally, (f) “the opportunity to read and write” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 762; see also Landry, 1987).

Lighter-skinned slaves were, of course, aware of these distinctions and eventually came to believe that their white blood made them superior to darker-skinned slaves (Frazier, 1957/1997; Landry, 1987; see also Frazier, 2001). Furthermore, in addition to skin color and occupational differences, “the similarities between whites and mulattoes in physical appearance, speech, dress, and customary behavior reinforced this attitude in the [enslaved] population as a whole” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 762). Light skin color came to be viewed as desirable and “symbolic of more humane treatment” (p. 763). At the same time, dark skin and “black” physical characteristics were “viewed as undesirable and as signs of inferiority” (p. 763). Frazier (1957) and Landry (1987) noted that, because of this stratification process, “mulattoes emerged at the top of the social hierarchy in black communities following the Civil War” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 763).

In addition, according to Blackwell (1975) and Frazier (1957, 2001), “mulattoes maintained their elite position in the black community for 50 years following Emancipation by passing their advantages on to their children, continuing their close association with whites, and avoiding intermarriage with darker blacks” (Keith & Herring, 1991, pp. 763-764; see also Landry, 1987). They also organized ways to maintain separation from darker-skinned blacks. This was primarily achieved by establishing clubs, societies, and churches where membership was granted based on tests of skin color or hair texture (Davis et al., 1998; Russell et al., 1992). However, Landry (1987) notes that darker-skinned blacks eventually gained access to education, became more successful, and, eventually, “dark-skinned middle-class black males” (p. 40) began marrying “into the old mulatto families,” thus darkening the complexion of the “black elite” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 764; see also Frazier, 2001, p. 415, 428-429).

During the 1960s, black consciousness increased as a result of both the civil rights movement and Black Nationalism; being dark-skinned no longer carried the same stigma it once did (hooks, 2006; Keith & Herring, 1991). It also became a time when “many light-skinned African Americans found themselves the object of years of collective anger by their darker peers” (Boyd-Franklin, 2003, p. 45). However, hooks (2006) pointed out that “these changes diminished as assimilation became the process by which black folks could successfully enter the mainstream. Once again, the fate of black folks rested with white power” (p. 205). Given this reversal, “complexion continued to be a significant predictor of such outcomes as educational attainment, occupation, and income among black Americans” (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 777) and, according to Hughes and Hertel

(1990), the legacy of skin preference and improved life chances for light-skinned blacks continued.

Critical Analysis of Relevant Research

Skin Color Bias

Overview of Skin Color Bias Section

To better understand research on skin color bias as it affects African Americans, this section reviews studies done by the following researchers: Parrish (1946), Wade and Bielitz (2005), Maddox and Gray (2002), Haugabrook (1993), and Robinson and Ward (1995). With the exception of Parrish's work, these studies were selected because they were relatively recent at the time of this study, showed the complexity of the skin color bias phenomenon, and demonstrated several important points related to skin color bias. Parrish's study also demonstrated key points related to skin color bias and showed the complexity of this issue. However, its most beneficial contribution to this study was the historical perspective it provided on this issue.

Together, these studies demonstrated that skin color bias has long been, and still is, considered a relevant research topic (Parrish, 1946; Maddox & Gray, 2002; Wade & Bielitz, 2005). Additionally, they have shown that Blacks and Whites both organize Blacks by skin tone (Maddox & Gray, 2002) and that Blacks and Whites both hold skin tone based stereotypes that are much more negative for darker-skinned African Americans than for lighter-skinned (Maddox & Gray, 2002). They also showed that many African Americans believe that skin color bias is still a problem in the African American community (Haugabrook, 1993) and, moreover, that many African Americans recall having been taught or told that certain skin colors were preferred (Haugabrook, 1993).

Lastly, Robinson and Ward's (1995) research suggested a trend toward African American preference for a medium skin tone and demonstrated that African Americans report having less satisfaction with their skin color if their skin color was lighter or darker than that of most other African Americans.

Earlier Research into Skin Color Bias – An Example

Parrish's (1946) article, *Color Names and Color Notions*, provides valuable empirical support for understanding skin color bias in that it provides an important historical perspective on this issue. In this article, Parrish catalogued the multi-stage study he conducted as part of his doctoral research into the subject of color groupings within the African American community and the common stereotypes associated with each group.

Parrish began his research by investigating the color names that were most well known to a group of 60 Negro college students as being commonly "applied by Negroes to each other" (Parrish, 1946, p. 13). He then took "the 25 color descriptions that were known to two-thirds or more of these [participants]" (p. 13) and arranged them on a skin color "scale ranging from zero (white) to fifty (black)," (p. 13) by averaging the ratings that qualified skin color judges assigned to each name. (It is unclear from the article what criteria were used in selecting individuals to be qualified skin color judges.) "Fairly distinct [color name] clusters" (p. 14) emerged around four color ranges or groups. By selecting a popular color name from each cluster, Parrish arbitrarily labeled these color groups as "High Yellow," "High Brown," "Brownskin," and "Black." "Chocolate Brown" was observed as a possible additional group that appeared between "Brownskin" and "Black."

Next, “in order to ascertain what, if any, [stereotypes were] associated with these color [groups, Parrish asked] a number of people (including eighty-eight junior high school [students]) to give physical descriptions and personality characterizations for each of several color classes” (p. 15). (In his article Parrish (1946) did not specify the range of ages and the number of people who were asked to give these descriptions and characterizations.) Parrish noted among the results from this stage of his study that the physical descriptions provided by participants were “favorable to the light and medium shades but unfavorable to the darker shades” (p. 15). In addition,

> personality traits were generally unfavorable for both the light and dark extremes but favorable for the middle color groups – the middle groups being “High Brown,” “Brownskin” and “Chocolate Brown.” Moreover, the most definite stereotypes were of the “High Yellow” and “Black” groups. The stereotypes most frequently encountered were typified by the expressions: (a) “They think they’re cute because they look like white [sic]”; (b) “They’re nice looking and are very lovable”; (c) “They’re evil and hard to get along with.” Obviously these [stereotypes] are meant to apply, respectively, to (a) light Negroes, (b) medium brown Negroes, and (c) very dark Negroes. (p. 15)

Parrish (1946) then took these dominant stereotypes, along with a few others that were “chosen at random,” (p. 16) and presented them in questionnaire form to 400 persons. (The makeup of these 400 persons was not specified in the article.) “Each [stereotype] was phrased as a completion statement in which the color group to which the statement referred had to be supplied” (p. 15).

The results from this stage of Parrish’s (1946) study showed a “widespread acceptance of [commonly known stereotypes] about color groups” (p. 15). By way of example, Table 1 shows that, out of four possible choices (Light Negroes; Medium Brown Negroes, Dark Negroes; All or No Answer), over 50% of participants made the

following sentence completions (the second most-selected choice is noted where it was selected by greater than 20% of the respondents).

Table 1

Sentence Completions as Assigned to Skin Color Groups by Parrish Study Participants

Sentence fragment	Skin color completion made by participants
Hard to get along with	Dark Negroes (52.5%); Light Negroes (23.2%)
Think they are better	Light Negroes (74.7%)
Sweet and affectionate	Medium Brown Negroes (57.7%)
Sensitive about color	Dark Negroes (68.4%)
Physically stronger	Dark Negroes (59.4%)
Teacher's favorites	Light Negroes (62.6%)
Excluded from sororities	Dark Negroes (75.0%)

Note. Created with data presented in "Color Names and Color Notions, by C. H. Parrish, 1946, *The Journal of Negro Education, 15*(1), pp. 13-20. Copyright 1946 by The Journal of Negro Education.

Parrish (1946) noted that "the definiteness of [the] collective judgments" (p. 16) shown by subjects in his study may seem surprising given "the racial dogma that color makes no difference within the Negro community" (p. 16) However, Parrish provided a possible explanation for this paradox through his observation that there was a general reluctance on the part of those within the African American community "to admit the existence of discriminatory attitudes toward other members of [their] own racial group" (p. 16). Therefore, while collectiveness of the judgments made by respondents to Parrish's study is inconsistent with the aforementioned dogma, it is, nevertheless, likely to be a good reflection of lived experiences and personally held views.

Parrish (1946) provided further support for the collectiveness of the views of respondents to this portion of the study in that "the prevalence of the notions described [were] not confined to [respondents from] any single color group" (p. 17). By way of example, "extremely dark persons exhibit[ed] the same attitudinal tendencies as lighter persons even when referring to items derogatory to themselves" (p. 17). In addition, Parrish noted the readiness with which the extremely light respondents (74%) asserted that "light Negroes think they are better than other Negroes." In other words, the same stereotypes based on skin color were adopted by the majority of respondents regardless of their own skin color and even when the stereotype was not favorable to the color group to which they belonged.

Parrish (1946) consulted the field of social psychology when seeking to understand the rationale behind the use of stereotypes. Based on his review of the literature, Parrish stated that "stereotyping is a time-saving device which is employed in dealing with people whom we do not know very well" (p. 18). Parrish also looked for influences outside of the Negro community in seeking to understand Negro skin color bias. In this regard, Parrish stated the following

> In calculating the possible influence of white people's conceptions of what Negroes are like upon Negroes' evaluations of themselves, the fact is often overlooked that these conceptions do not impinge upon Negroes directly but come to them by implication through the treatment they receive at the hands of white people. From the point of view of the whites the [stereotypes] held with regard to Negroes are used as a means of social control within the white community in order to justify and explain the subordinate status to which Negroes are relegated. Whether Negroes get hold of and take over these [stereotypes] wholesale and in detail is not important as long as they are kept in place by a conviction of their own incompetence. (p. 19)

With these statements, Parrish (1946) spoke directly to the systemic oppression based on the social construction of race that has guided skin color bias within the African American community and adds an important perspective on this issue.

Based on Parrish's (1946) above described studies, Parrish made "a few tentative conclusions," some of which are highly relevant to this study. First, he concluded that there were a "few (from three to five) … color categories for which distinct stereotypes have been formed." (p. 20). Popular labels given to these groups were mentioned above and are repeated here for convenience: High Yellow, High Brown, Brownskin, Chocolate Brown and Black. Second, Parrish concluded that "light skin and other physical traits which approximate the Caucasian type have high value in the Negro community" (p. 20). However, he noted that skin color had "become somewhat detached from the other [physical] traits" and had "acquired a special significance" "because of its symbolic importance in Negro-white relations" (p. 20). Third, Parrish observed that "extremely light skin color evokes envy and resentment on the part of darker persons, who come to harbor a genuine distrust and suspicion of light colored Negroes" (p. 20). Parrish was careful to note, however, that "these negative attitudes … are not directed toward the highly valued, light color but rather toward the persons who, because of their light skins, are believed to be conceited and snobbish" (p. 20). Fourth, Parrish noted that there was significance to the skin color described as "Black" in that it was "considered the worst color to be by three out of every five of the persons who were asked" (p. 20). And, fifth, Parrish observed that "the strongest attitudes [were] directed toward the color extremes … whereas the favorable attitudes toward persons of medium shades appear[ed] to be the result of a compromise between the rejections of light and dark" (p. 20).

Parrish (1946) closed his article with the following statement,

> Most of these notions seem to be indigenous to the Negro group in the sense that they are products of the Negro's response to the general racial situation in which dark skin color has become associated with low status. (p. 20)

Interestingly, this statement epitomizes the confusion within the Negro community about the cause and source of skin color bias within the Negro community. Skin color bias is certainly not "indigenous" to this community. Instead, these stereotypes flow directly from the disdain shown toward and disadvantaging of darker-skinned slaves and the simultaneous privileging and preferencing of those who were lighter-skinned. It is less a response to "the general racial situation in which dark skin color has become associated with low status" (Parrish, 1946, p. 20) and more of an internalization of the enforced belief system of the white oppressing class that those with "white" skin color were superior to those who do not have it. And it followed naturally that the oppressors also believed that, of those in the inferior classes, the closer one's skin color was to "white" the more superior he or she was to those whose skin color was darker.

While Parrish's (1946) studies were conducted only in Louisville, Kentucky, occasionally used slightly different methodologies within each study, and included different participants as well as a wide range of ages and sample sizes for each study, his studies offer an important historical perspective for understanding stereotypes and skin color bias within the African American community.

Salience of Continued Skin Color Bias Research

Wade and Bielitz (2005) recently studied the issue of skin color difference in African Americans and specifically examined whether skin color impacted evaluations of African Americans. The sample for their study consisted of 77 white university students

and, although the focus of the study was on the evaluations whites made of African Americans of light or dark skin color, the researchers anticipated that their results would be applicable to African American evaluators as well.

In their review of the literature, Wade and Bielitz (2005) noted (a) the existence of skin color bias in the United States, (b) advantages based on skin color, and (c) a link between skin color and attractiveness for African Americans. They also took into account both Dion, Berscheid, and Walster's research (1972) that showed a connection (presumably for whites – no racial categories were mentioned) between being attractive and being deemed more socially desirable and Cash and Duncan's research (1984) that showed that this connection held true for African Americans as well. As a result, Wade and Bielitz surmised that skin color would impact viewers' perceptions of attractiveness and, therefore, the personality evaluations of African Americans. Wade and Bielitz seemed to have considered having a good personality evaluation to be equivalent to being perceived as "possessing the socially desirable traits" (Wade & Bielitz, 2005, p. 217).

To examine the impact of skin color on personality evaluations, Wade and Bielitz (2005) asked participants to read general descriptions of stimulus persons, which included each stimulus person's sex and whether he or she was fair- or dark-skinned. Afterward, participants were asked to evaluate the stimulus persons based on "the 27 different personality trait characteristics from Dion et al.'s (1972) research" (Wade & Bielitz, 2005, p. 221). Wade and Bielitz also asked participants to rate each "stimulus person's probable life experiences and future happiness" using eight additional "life success" (p. 222) items. How Wade and Bielitz determined the accuracy or validity of these traits as showing personality or life success is unclear.

Wade and Bielitz (2005) then conducted an "ANOVA … on an average of the 27 personality traits" (p. 223). They also performed "ANOVAs … individually for each of the eight traits referring to life experiences" (p. 223). Based on their analysis, Wade and Bielitz made the following conclusions and suggestions for how their data could be generalized and utilized when working with African Americans.

> Skin color differentially affects White men and women's perceptions of the intelligence, enthusiasm, and parenting skill of African American men and women…. Because African Americans and Whites are said to react similarly to African Americans' skin color, one may be able to generalize this same pattern to African American perceivers. These findings may be able to help therapists advise and treat African Americans who are troubled with skin color issues. In addition, these findings may help to further raise awareness with regard to how skin color plays a role in the perception of African Americans. These findings may also be useful for further understanding in other areas of psychology where race plays a role such as stereotyping, psychopathology, jury decision making, and criminal sentencing (Blair et al., 2004; Blair et al., 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Sommers & Ellsworth, 2001). (p. 231)

Wade and Bielitz's (2005) primary conclusion, while technically accurate, is presented in such as way as to appear to be more broad sweeping than it actually is for several reasons that will be described below. In most cases, their study showed no main effects and no significant interactions related to skin color of the stimulus persons except in the life success items listed in Table 2. In addition, most of these show more of an influence of the stimulus person's gender than skin color. Moreover, the other main effects were few and related to the *sex* of the *participant*:

1. Female participants gave higher ratings for attractiveness than male participants did.
2. Female participants gave higher ratings for intelligence than male participants did.
3. Female participants gave higher ratings for occupational success than male participants did.

Table 2

Life Success Items Showing Main Effects or Significant Interactions Related to Skin Color of the Stimulus Persons

Life Success Item	Result(s)	Comment(s)
Attractiveness	All African American men (whether fair- or dark-skinned) were rated higher than all African American women.	Thus showing a difference between *genders* regardless of skin color.
Intelligence	Fair-skinned women were rated higher than fair-skinned men. (Dark-skinned men and women were rated equivalently on this item.)	Thus showing a difference between *genders within a particular skin color* not between skin colors.
	All African American women (whether fair- or dark-skinned) were rated higher than all African American men.	Thus showing a difference between *genders* regardless of skin color.
Parenting	Fair-skinned women were rated higher than fair-skinned men. (Dark-skinned men and women were rated equivalently on this item.)	Thus showing a difference between *genders within a particular skin color* not between skin colors.
Friendliness	All African American men (whether fair- or dark-skinned) were rated higher than all African American women.	Thus showing a difference between *genders* regardless of skin color.

Note. Created with data presented in "The Differential Effect of Skin Color on Attractiveness, Personality Evaluations, and Perceived Life Success of African Americans," by T. J. Wade, and S. Bielitz, 2005, *Journal of Black Psychology, 31*(3), pp. 223-227. Copyright 2005 by The Association of Black Psychologists.

In their results section, Wade and Bielitz (2005) claimed marginally significant interactions related to the sex of participant and skin color for the life success items of intelligence ($p < .08$) and enthusiasm ($p < .07$). They also claimed a marginally significant main effect for the skin color of the stimulus person for the life success item

of enthusiasm ($p < .07$). But in their discussion section, they described their marginally significant results as significant.

According to Steinberg (2004), the

> 95 percent confidence level has been established in social science as the minimum level for claiming significance of any kind …. You can only claim significance and generalizability if the test says you have a 95 percent or better chance of [your claims] being correct. (p. 142)

Thus, Wade and Bielitz's (2005) reported results of marginal significance are not considered statistically significant in the research community and will not be considered as such for the purposes of this analysis.

Wade and Bielitz's (2005) results are further limited in generalizability due to the nature of their sample. To begin with, the sample size was small, 77 persons, and the researchers acknowledged that this "led to low power for many of the marginally significant effects" (Wade & Bielitz, 2005, p. 232). In addition, the sample only consisted of Americans of European descent who would be classified as white in the United States. The researchers were comfortable with this because they considered one study and one documentary video to have suggested "that Blacks and Whites respond similarly to African Americans' skin color with respect to attractiveness" (Wade & Bielitz, 2005, p. 232).

Wade and Bielitz further referenced Gergen (1968) as having reported "that the meaning of skin color in the Black community can be passed on to Whites as a result of cross-cultural interaction" (Wade & Bielitz, 2005, p. 232). However, Gergen actually stated that "[connotative] meanings [of colors (particularly black and white) that are] common within a culture may be passed on to others as a simple result of cross-cultural

interaction" (p. 120). It is not at all clear that Gergen was prepared to make the leap from connotative meanings of the colors black and white in cultures around the world to skin color variations among Americans whose ancestors include people of African descent who were enslaved in the United States. While Gergen did mention skin color bias and skin color advantage later in his chapter, it was not the focus of the section from which Wade and Bielitz appear to have pulled their conclusion relating to the transmission of skin color meanings from the "Black community … to Whites" (Wade & Bielitz, 2005, p. 232)

Further, while choosing to apply the idea that connotative meanings of color may be passed from culture to culture to the connotative meanings of skin color variations within the African American community seems not unreasonable, Wade and Bielitz' conclusion about the direction of this transmission does, considering that skin color bias originated with whites. It is not illogical, however, to expect some level of similarity given the identical origins of skin color bias. Regardless, one study and one documentary do not provide sufficient evidence to support reliable generalizability from whites to blacks with regard to skin color bias. Wade and Bielitz (2005) did at least acknowledge, however, that, in spite of their expectation of generalizability, "follow-up research with a sample of African Americans is needed to further ascertain that these findings can be generalized to African American evaluators" (p. 232).

Wade and Bielitz's (2005) study generalizability was further limited by the narrow range of the participants' ages and socioeconomic statuses (SES) resulting in a poor representation of the general population. The ages of study participants ranged from

19 to 22 and their average socioeconomic statuses were presumed to be the same as those of most students on the university campus – upper-middle-class and wealthy.

Also of note is that Wade and Bielitz (2005) appeared not to have used pictures in their study methods and supported this practice by relying on Wade, Romano, and Blue's (2004) study that suggested that skin color could "be manipulated effectively for White participants using only descriptions" (p. 221). It is concerning that skin color *alone* is assumed to be a sufficient stand-in for attractiveness or, at least, a very strong determinant of it. While skin color bias can lead one's attractiveness quotient to be increased or decreased based on skin color, a description of a stimulus person's appearance that includes only skin color is not sufficient to justify subsequent hypothesizing that participants will assume attractiveness for light-skinned women and dark-skinned males. It is also possible that the use of the descriptor "fair" instead of "light" was problematic given that Wade and Bielitz's study was focused on assessing evaluations of attractiveness through descriptions only and yet the word "fair" as a descriptor is commonly known to mean both attractive or pleasing in appearance as well as light in skin complexion.

For the sake of brevity, additional critique of Wade and Bielitz's (2005) study is not included here. However, the analysis above is sufficient to identify major concerns with their conclusions and generalizations. In spite of this, it is noteworthy that, even as we head into a new century and millennium, there are researchers who consider the topic of skin color bias worthy of study. The fact that this and several other studies have been conducted on this difficult and painful subject suggests that there is much to be learned in this area.

Skin Tone Stereotypes Are More Negative for Darker-Skinned African Americans

Indeed, another recent study points to the significance of the topic of skin color bias. Maddox and Gray (2002) conducted two studies designed to explore the role of skin tone in how Black Americans are both perceived and cognitively represented by Blacks and Whites in America. In the first study, the researchers analyzed data from 62 participants (30 Black and 32 White). Originally, there were 94 participants. However, Maddox and Gray (2002) decided to focus on the data from only 62 of those participants "due to the nature of the hypotheses" (p. 252). The difference between the participants whose data was not included in this analysis is not clear.

Participants were asked to watch a simulated "group discussion in which either the race or the skin tone of the discussants was varied" (Maddox & Gray, 2002, p. 252). (Half of the participants watched the simulation where the race composition condition was varied and half watched the simulation where the skin tone composition was varied.) In each case, soon after watching the simulation, "participants were asked to match" a list of twenty-four randomly ordered statements that had been made within the simulation with photographs of the discussants who made those statements. They were also asked to indicate the level of confidence with which they made each pairing.

The key hypothesis of this first study was that people distinguish between other persons by race and by skin tone. To test this hypothesis, Maddox and Gray (2002) examined the "pattern of within- and between-category errors" (p.253) and found that "all participants, regardless of race, organized the discussion around race or skin tone" (p. 254), respectively, depending on whether race or skin tone was the composition condition of the simulated discussion.

This tendency by both Blacks and Whites to use skin tone as "a basis of categorization" provided important theoretical support and was a necessary precondition for Maddox and Gray's (2002) second study on the "existence of skin tone-based stereotypes" (p. 254).

Maddox and Gray (2002) defined stereotypes as "cognitive representations that contain a perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about a social group" (p. 254). In their second study, they asked 40 Black and 42 White participants "to report their knowledge of the cultural stereotypes associated with light- and dark-skinned Blacks" (p. 255). Maddox and Gray's analysis using mixed-model ANOVAs showed that participants listed a greater number of negative than positive traits for dark-skinned Blacks and a greater number of positive than negative traits for light-skinned Blacks. Further analysis demonstrated that this was true regardless of the sex of the identified target. Additional analysis taking into consideration the race of the participants found this to be statistically significant in all cases but one. White participants still associated a greater number of positive than negative traits for light-skinned Black males as did participants of other races, but this difference did not reach statistical significance.

Maddox and Gray (2002) continued their analysis by having the traits provided by participants coded as stereotypic (based on previous research, see Devine, 1989): athletic, criminal, dirty/smelly, inferior, lazy, ostentatious, poor, rhythmic, sexually aggressive, tough/aggressive, uneducated, and unintelligent. Any traits provided by participants who did not fit into these categories were grouped into six counterstereotypic categories and four neutral categories.

Maddox and Gray (2002) then conducted an analysis of the reported traits that showed that, regardless of the race of the participant, "participants described dark-skinned Blacks using more negative and stereotypic traits, whereas light-skinned Blacks were described with more positive and counterstereotypic traits" (p.258).

With this finding, Maddox and Gray (2002) then analyzed "the specific trait categories on which light- and dark-skinned Blacks are perceived to differ" (p.257). The results of this analysis are notable in that both White and Black participants had categories of stereotypical traits on which there was a statistically significant difference between how often that category was selected for dark-skinned Blacks and how often it was selected for light-skinned Blacks. (See Tables 3 and 4 for the lists of trait categories that were differentially associated with light- and dark-skinned Blacks in a statistically significant way by Whites and Blacks, respectively.) Some categories of traits were used to describe all Blacks of a particular skin color and others were gender-specific.

Table 3

Statistically Significant Trait Category Association by Whites

Black Stimulus Persons	Traits Associated with Black Stimulus Persons by Whites
dark-skinned males and females	poor; tough/aggressive; unattractive; uneducated
dark-skinned males	criminal; ostentatious
dark-skinned females	lazy; unintelligent
light-skinned males	wealthy
light-skinned females	attractive; intelligent

Note. Created with data presented in "Cognitive Representations of Black Americans: Reexploring the Role of Skin Tone," by K. B. Maddox, and S. A. Gray, 2002, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28*(2), p. 257. Copyright 2002 by Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc.

Table 4

Statistically Significant Trait Category Association by Blacks

Black Stimulus Persons	Traits Associated with Black Stimulus Persons by Blacks
dark-skinned males and females	poor
dark-skinned males	criminal; tough/aggressive
dark-skinned females	lazy; unattractive
light-skinned males and females	intelligent
light-skinned males	educated; wealthy
light-skinned females	attractive; motivated; self-assured

Note. Created with data presented in "Cognitive Representations of Black Americans: Reexploring the Role of Skin Tone," by K. B. Maddox, and S. A. Gray, 2002, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28*(2), p. 257. Copyright 2002 by Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc.

What was not analyzed in this study was the skin tone of the Blacks who were participants in this study. It would have been interesting had the researchers noted whether there were any statistical differences based on that variable also.

Regardless, the overall findings of these two studies are significant. The findings show that both Blacks and Whites take note of skin tone and are aware of the stereotypes relating to skin tone. Further, the trending of negative stereotypes toward darker-skinned blacks and positive stereotypes toward lighter-skinned blacks shown in Tables 3 and 4 suggests that skin color bias is still an important factor in terms of how African Americans are perceived.

African Americans Consider Skin Color Bias to Be a Problem among African Americans

Haugabrook (1993) conducted a study to better understand the role of skin color bias in the Black community. The study was conducted through a 32-item questionnaire

that included questions about skin color preferences as well as experiences and attitudes based on skin color. This survey was mailed out to every Black undergraduate student at West Georgia College (744) and had a final response rate of 19% or 133 surveys. The respondents were largely female (81%) and most respondents, regardless of sex, described themselves in a range from medium- to light-skinned. Seventy-five percent of all respondents expressed satisfaction with their skin color.

While the low response rate and limited representation from males and dark-skinned Blacks restrict the generalizability of this study, certain findings remain notable. For instance, 93% of respondents felt that Black Americans had anywhere from a "moderate to serious problem with skin color bias and its consequent affect [*sic*] on self identity and acceptance of other [Black Americans]" (Haugabrook, 1993, p.19).

In addition, about 60% of respondents report having used derogatory language in reference to persons darker than themselves and a comparable number of respondents report having used derogatory language in reference to persons lighter than themselves (Haugabrook, 1993). Moreover, almost half of the respondents reported having received favorable treatment because of their skin color and a comparable number also reported having received unfavorable treatment for the same reason (Haugabrook, 1993).

Also of interest, and directly related to this study, is that 59% of Haugabrook's (1993) sample acknowledged that they had been "told or taught by the actions of others that lighter or darker skin was more accepted than the other extreme and the majority of the 59% indicated they were taught or told that lighter skin is more acceptable" (p.17). While Haugabrook's study may have limited generalizability, it certainly suggests that skin color bias issues continue to be relevant and worthy of study.

Lighter- and Darker- Skinned African Americans Report Less Satisfaction with Their Skin Color

Robinson and Ward (1995) conducted a study "to explore the meaning of skin color in the lives of African American adolescents … and its effect on self-esteem" (p. 259). To do so they collected questionnaire responses from 123 African American adolescents between the ages of 11 and 19 (48% were male and 52% were female) from the states of Maryland (41%), Massachusetts (30%), and California (29%). They later held a group discussion with ten of these respondents (5 male and 5 female) to examine key issues in greater detail.

Robinson and Ward (1995) acknowledged that their study was limited in that "only two questions were used to assess satisfaction with skin color" (p. 272). Also significant is that the study's method of categorizing respondents by skin color "may have adversely affected the study's internal validity" (p. 272). With regard to categorization by skin color, respondents were asked whether they considered their skin color to be lighter, darker, or somewhere in between when compared with most Black people. Robinson and Ward then used these results to classify respondents into three categories based on skin color: darker, lighter, and in-between. This method of categorization is clearly "subjective" (p. 272) as well as relative.

While these limitations are important to keep in mind, the respondents' trend toward preference for a medium skin tone is worth noting. Robinson and Ward (1995) found that respondents who "self-reported as 'lighter' or 'darker' in comparison to most African Americans had lower levels of satisfaction with their skin color than did students whose skin color was classified as 'somewhere in between'" (p. 273).

Summary of Skin Color Bias Section

The research described in the above section emphasized some important points with regard to skin color bias as it affects African Americans. This research made evident that skin color bias has long been, and still is, a relevant and important research topic; that both Blacks and Whites organize by skin tone and are aware of the negative stereotypes associated with darker skin tone; that African Americans still consider skin color bias to be a problem in the African American community; and that African Americans report having less satisfaction with their skin color if their skin was lighter or darker than most African Americans. These findings were highly salient for this research study. However, for additional information on skin color bias, see also Averhart and Bigler (1997), Blair (2002), Coard (1997), Davis et al. (1998), Devine (1989), Hill (2002), Jones, T. (2000), Maddox (2006), Porter (1991), and Wade (1996).

Skin Color Advantage

Another area of focus for research related to skin color difference in the African American community is skin color advantage or the attendant advantages associated with being a particular skin color. Unfortunately, one of the limitations of the existing studies on skin color difference in the African American community is that "they are based on small samples collected in specific localities" (Hughes & Hertel, 1990, p. 1108). However, while dated, the 1979-1980 National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) does address these limitations in that it has a large national sample that includes "reliable skin color variables" (Hunter, 2002, p. 179).

The sample for the NSBA includes data from 2,107 respondents and

> was drawn according to a multistage-area probability procedure that was designed to ensure that every black household in the United States had an equal probability of being selected for the study. Within each household in the sample, one person aged 18 or older was randomly selected to be interviewed from among those eligible for the study. Only self-identified black American citizens were eligible for the study. Professionally trained black interviewers carried out all interviewing. (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 765)

In addition to being responsible for collecting responses, interviewers were also responsible for assessing the skin color of each respondent. They did so using a counter-balanced 5-point scale ranging from very dark brown to very light brown.

Two of the most well-known analyses of this dataset were conducted by Hughes and Hertel (1990) and Keith and Herring (1991). Hochschild (2006) also conducted a smaller analysis of this dataset with similar results to Hughes and Hertel and Keith and Herring. Gullickson (2005) conducted a more detailed analysis of this dataset that also included later waves of this study that were not included in Hochschild's, Hughes and Hertel's, or Keith and Herring's analyses. Gullickson's results introduced some important distinctions and will be discussed later.

Overview of Skin Color Advantage Section

To better understand research on skin color advantage as it affects African Americans, this section reviews studies done by the following researchers: Keith and Herring (1991), Hughes and Hertel (1990), Udry, Baumann, and Chase (1971), and Gullickson (2005). Keith and Herring as well as Hughes and Hertel are reviewed because both get cited frequently with regard to skin color advantage. Gullickson is reviewed because he provides a critical analysis of these two studies. And Udry et al. is reviewed because Gullickson relies on this study in his critique of the first two mentioned. All of

these studies also show the complexity of the skin color advantage phenomenon as it affects African Americans.

Key points presented in this section are that, on a macro level, skin tone is a predictor of occupation and income (Keith & Herring, 1991) as well as socioeconomic status (Hughes & Hertel, 1990) for African Americans. However, it will continue to be important to also look at the data by age cohort to assess for changes over time (Gullickson, 2005).

Skin Color is a Predictor of Occupation and Income Level for African Americans

Keith and Herring's (1991) analysis of the NSBA focused on determining whether "skin tone continue[d] to be related to stratification outcomes" (p. 766). The primary outcomes Keith and Herring analyzed, based on skin color, were the respondents' (a) educational level attained, (b) occupational level attained, (c) personal income level attained, and (d) family income level attained. In Keith and Herring's initial analysis, they simply looked at the bivariate relationships between skin color and each of the aforementioned items. In doing so, they noted stark differences between those with the darkest and lightest skin colors as well as an upward trend from the darkest- to the lightest-skinned for each outcome. A numerical summary of their results, where possible, has been provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Analysis of Key Outcomes Based on Skin Color

Outcomes	Very Dark	Dark Brown	Medium Brown	Light Brown	Very Light
Educational Attainment (in years)	10.3	10.2	11.0	11.6	12.2
Personal Income	$6,503	$7,427	$7,938	$8,632	$10,627
Family Income	$11,303	$11,888	$13,900	$15,907	$16,977
Occupational Attainment	This category cannot be easily described non-pictorially because of the multiple categories analyzed, however, Keith and Herring (1991) noted that very light respondents were "substantially more likely to be employed as professional and technical workers than [were] those with darker complexions. In contrast, those with very dark complexions [were] more likely than all others to be laborers" (p. 768).				

Note. Created with data presented in "Skin Tone and Stratification in the Black Community," by V. M. Keith, and C. Herring, *American Journal of Sociology*, 97(3), pp. 767-770. Copyright 1991 by The University of Chicago.

While Keith and Herring (1991) considered this level of analysis helpful in that it showed "the magnitude of the discrepancies among blacks" (p. 769), they realized it had its drawbacks also. Their primary concerns were that it "did not take into account the interrelationships among these stratification variables [and that it] did not provide statistical controls for factors that mediate the effects of skin tone" (pp. 769-770).

In an attempt to address these concerns, Keith and Herring (1991) conducted a path analysis. According to Sprinthall (2003), path analysis is a correlation technique that "is being used to establish the possibility of cause-and-effect relationships" (p. 411). It attempts to do this using multiple regression analysis and a path diagram "that indicate[s] the direction of the various relationships" (p. 412).

Keith and Herring (1991) created "a conceptual diagram that illustrate[d] the direct and indirect effect of skin tone on income (as well as education and occupation)" (p. 771). They then conducted a path analysis which pointed to a statistically significant impact of skin tone on each of the four outcomes analyzed (net of the other three outcomes as well as of other salient demographic and background characteristics such as sex, age, or parental socioeconomic status). Keith and Herring concluded

> that skin tone has bona fide effects on such stratification outcomes as education, occupation, and income. In all cases, these effects are consistent with the idea that lighter skin complexions are associated with more favorable stratification consequences over and above those conferred by parental background and sociodemographic attributes. (p. 773)

They also concluded from their analysis that it was unlikely that historical factors alone (such as the advantaging of light-skinned slaves, the early advantages of light-skinned African Americans immediately following emancipation, and the historical collusion to keep social capital and advantages in the light-skinned caste) "produce disadvantage and unequal outcomes" (Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 775) based on differences in skin color. In other words, the researchers concluded that the ongoing influence of bias, preference, and differential treatment based on skin color has its own effect on outcomes (such as education, occupation, and income) that is in addition to any historical advantage (Keith & Herring, 1991).

Unfortunately, these results (Keith & Herring, 1991) must be viewed merely as suggestions for future analysis and experimentation since the use of path analysis, itself, is controversial. While those in support of path analysis consider it to be a significant improvement over the "extrapolations of causation that at one time were taken from simple bivariate correlations" (Sprinthall, 2003, p. 412), others consider its conclusions to

be overreaching in their certainty. For example, Games (1988) strongly disagreed with using "correlational data to make causative conclusions" (p. 9). Indeed, his opinion is that "the only justifiable conclusion from a correlational study with consistent data is that the data do not contradict the model" (p. 9).

While this does not mean that Keith and Herring's (1991) conclusions based on their path analysis were incorrect, it does mean that additional studies are necessary before we can know that they are correct. And yet, the overall trends from their bivariate analyses, when combined with an understanding of history related to skin color bias, remain compelling and worthy of notice.

Skin Color Is a Predictor of Socioeconomic Status for African Americans

One year prior to Keith and Herring's (1991) analysis, Hughes and Hertel (1990) had conducted their own analysis of the NSBA dataset with similar results. Hughes and Hertel found that respondents with lighter skin had "greater education, occupational prestige, personal income, and family income than those with darker skin" (p. 1109). They also noted that "these relationships [were] not explained by the fact that lighter-skinned blacks [came] from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds" (p. 1109).

Hughes and Hertel (1990) also conducted two other more simple analyses to get an idea of the strength of the effects of skin color and to learn whether the effects of skin color had changed significantly in the two or three decades that had passed before the NSBA dataset was collected. To determine the strength of the effects of skin color, Hughes and Hertel compared "the effects of race on socioeconomic status variables … with skin color effects calculated using data from the National Survey of Black Americans" (p. 1111). The researchers collected the race data from a 1983 statistical

report provided by the United States Bureau of the Census. Hughes and Hertel's analysis showed quite similar results for education and occupation whether comparing race (black to white) or skin color (dark-skinned to light-skinned). The results for family income were striking for skin color though not as severe as the difference based on race. Overall, Hughes and Hertel concluded that "dark-skinned blacks suffer much the same disadvantage relative to light-skinned blacks that blacks, in general, suffer relative to whites" (p. 1112).

To tentatively test whether the effects of skin color had changed over time, Hughes and Hertel (1990) compared educational and occupational data collected in the 1960s from three different studies with NSBA data collected in 1979-1980. They also conducted a separate analysis comparing occupational and skin color data with estimates from a fourth study conducted in 1950. Across all comparisons, Hughes and Hertel noticed that, although "some movement" could be seen, there had been "no substantial change in the relationship between skin color and socioeconomic status from 1950 to 1980" (p. 1114).

Hughes and Hertel (1990) did note that the effect of skin color on educational attainment for younger people was less than for older people. They considered this a sign that the effects of skin color in this area might be changing. However, given evidence that skin color continued to affect other factors associated with status, Hughes and Hertel felt that "the question of why black people with lighter skin have higher socioeconomic status than those with dark skin remains unanswered"(p. 1115). In an attempt to answer this question, Hughes and Hertel surmised that an explanation might "be found in social

processes that occur in the ongoing lives of black people, not in their family backgrounds" (p. 1116).

Interestingly enough, given Maddox and Gray's (2002) study described above, Hughes and Hertel (1990) made the following statement toward the end of their article.

> Regardless of whether [it is] the relationships with blacks or with whites [that] are primarily responsible for producing the effects of skin color, these effects may occur because skin color, like race (Cohen & Roper 1972), gender (Lockheed & Hall 1976), and attractiveness (Webster & Driskell 1983; Umberson & Hughes 1987), functions as a diffuse status characteristic (Berger et al. 1977) so that high-status affiliates (blacks with light skin in this case) are treated by others as though they are more competent than low-status affiliates (those with dark skin) even though there is no information conveyed by the status itself indicating competency. The skin color of blacks may thus be used as a status characteristic to make interpretations and judgments of blacks in a process that may be largely unconscious and unintentional. To our knowledge, there are no studies establishing skin color for blacks as a diffuse status characteristic, and we suggest this as another focus for research. (p. 1116)

Maddox and Gray's research did a fine job of attempting to answer this question and reminds us that bias, preferences, and stereotypes are intricately intertwined with historical advantages in producing the skin color hierarchy of which we still see evidence today.

An Early Look at Outcome Changes between African American Age Cohorts

Udry et al. (1971) conducted a much smaller study on skin color that was local to Washington, DC. Their sample consisted of 350 married couples who were also recent parents. For some of their analyses, Udry et al. grouped these respondents into four years-of-marriage categories or cohorts (1-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9+ years). For other analyses, they divided them into two groups (less than 6 years, more than 6 years). The study was specifically undertaken to "examine the changing relationship between status attributes, mate selection, and skin color, by comparison of duration-of-marriage cohorts" (p. 722).

Udry et al. (1971) acknowledged that their study had several limitations, most of which were due to the nature of the sample. The sample was small, local, and consisted only of married couples who lived together and who also had had a recent birth event. In addition, “widely disparate sampling rates had to be used” “in order to get a sufficient number of middle-class respondents” as well as “upwardly and downwardly mobile respondents” (p. 726). “This introduce[d] problems in estimating variance for significance tests” and “inflate[d] significance tests by a small but unknown amount” (p. 726). In addition, the “probability of finding significant differences [was] spuriously increased” (p. 726).

Udry et al. (1971) also acknowledged that “a longitudinal design would have been desirable for testing the hypothesis” and realized that “the extent to which the cohort analysis actually represent[ed] changes over time [was] dependent upon the assumptions [they had] made” (pp. 726-727). Given that their findings, when separated out by gender, appear to be different from those found in most analyses of the NSBA data, it would, indeed, have been beneficial for them to have been able to have used a longitudinal design to test their hypotheses.

While Udry et al. presented their findings for women after those of the men, here they will be presented in reverse order because it is the findings for men that will be more extensively critiqued in this section. For women, Udry et al. (1971) compared the relationship between the darkness of the women’s skin with status variables such as the husband’s education, the wife’s education, and the husband’s mobility. For all four years-of-marriage cohorts and for each variable, dark-skinned women were at a disadvantage compared to light-skinned women. For the variables of husband’s education and wife’s

education, there appeared to be a slight lessening of the disadvantage but, even in the shortest-duration cohort, it was still significant. And the variable of husband's mobility remained virtually unchanged from the longest- to the shortest-duration cohorts.

For men, Udry et al. (1971) compared the relationship between the darkness of the men's skin with status variables such as husband's education, wife's education, wife's skin color, and husband's mobility. Given the expectations of disadvantage in all categories for the men, Udry et al. were surprised to find a reversal to the trend of disadvantage when moving from the longest-duration cohort to the shortest for the variables of husband's education, wife's education, and husband's mobility. Only the variable of wife's skin color did not improve enough for a reversal of the disadvantage.

Udry et al. (1971) investigated further to understand this overall trend in reversal for the husband mobility variable. They did so by examining each husband's job-mobility orientation or "the extent to which the man was willing to sacrifice health, friends, family, and familiar surroundings to get a better job" (p. 728). What they found was that the darkest-skinned men were the most inclined to make the aforementioned sacrifices in order to advance, "with each progressively lighter-skin group less strongly oriented" (p. 729). They then added "mobility orientation to a regression of skin color with mobility" and found that this explained the variation in the husband's mobility "twice as much … as skin color alone" (p. 729). In addition, in the longest-duration cohorts, "those with dark skins [also had] relatively high mobility orientation …, but they [were] not more likely than those with lighter skins to have experienced upward mobility" (p. 729).

Udry et al. (1971) surmised that it was an increase in racial pride (resulting from the Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black is Beautiful movements) that was responsible

for the increase in mobility orientation. They also reasoned that the positive impact an increase in racial pride would have on mobility orientation, and, therefore, job mobility, did not happen for the longest-duration cohorts because they had already made most of their "status-relevant decisions … prior to the heightening of racial pride" (p. 729).

Udry et al.'s (1971) preference for their own line of reasoning seems questionable given their indifference toward an equally valid alternate path of reasoning that even they agreed is entirely plausible.

> An alternative explanation for our findings is based on the supposition that black-skinned Negroes have always known that they would have to work harder and sacrifice to get ahead. Perhaps they even brought up their dark-skinned sons to be more work oriented. During the recent period, more job opportunities have opened up for Negroes generally. When this occurred, it was the blackest who were already equipped with the psychological orientation which allowed them to move in on the new opportunities. This interpretation is in no way inconsistent with our data, and on that account it must be considered seriously. From any of the published materials relating skin color to personality, however, it is hard to see how one would predict that, even when "nothing has happened" on the race front, the blackest men would be the most ambitious, since there is unmistakable evidence of their poor chances for success. Until more evidence is available or until a more convincing theoretical support can be found for this argument, we prefer our first explanation. (p. 730)

Part of the questionable nature of Udry et al.'s (1971) reasoning is that a higher mobility orientation cannot easily be interpreted as a positive sign or an improvement. Being in the position where you feel you have to be more likely to sacrifice your "health, friends, family, and familiar surroundings to get a better job" sounds more like being in a one-down position rather than an improved one. It would make sense that light-skinned blacks, who had been historically advantaged with regard to employment, would feel less of a need to make sacrifices that have the potential to be quite damaging to other personal or familial goals. Udry et al.'s question was not designed to assess who was the most

ambitious but rather who would be willing to make hurtful sacrifices to get a better job. In addition, contrary to Udry et al.'s reasoning, there is no need for anything different to have happened on the race front since it is highly likely that the darkest blacks have always had to be willing to make sacrifices, even with the clear likelihood, as Udry et al. put it, "of their poor chances for success" (p. 730). A greater willingness to sacrifice was necessary just to preserve the status quo. When that willingness was combined with a reduction in legal discrimination and in many of the limitations to educational and occupational opportunity, they were naturally propelled ahead to a position of relative advantage in the areas of educational and occupational attainment. A reduction in discrimination is more likely the cause of the reversal in disadvantage for dark-skinned blacks as opposed to an increase in racial pride.

In addition, what is noticeably lacking from Udry et al.'s (1971) assessment is an analysis of income. Hughes and Hertel's (1990) analysis showed that whites, when compared to blacks, and light-skinned blacks, when compared to dark-skinned blacks, have higher incomes for comparable levels of education. Hughes and Hertel's analysis for attainment of "professional and managerial occupations" (p. 1112) showed similar results. Both analyses demonstrate the limitations that an improved education outcome may have because of racism and skin color bias.

Also, while Udry et al. (1971) attributed the increase in mobility orientation to an increase in racial pride, as noted earlier, not much at all changed for the women. Compared with darker-skinned women, lighter-skinned women were still able to become more educated as well as marry men who were more educated and more upwardly mobile than those the darker-skinned women were able to marry. In addition, Udry et al.'s data

suggested that the darker-skinned men who were able to get more education and become more upwardly mobile then had an "increased probability of … marrying light women" (p. 731). It is possible that they did so because they met their wives in college. But it is also possible that racial pride did not have quite the impact that Udry et al. surmised that it did.

A Later Look at Outcome Changes between African American Age Cohorts

Gullickson (2005), however, found promise in Udry et al.'s (1971) analysis even though he acknowledged that their study has "been viewed skeptically by other scholars" (p. 160) including Hughes and Hertel (1990). Gullickson considered both Keith and Herring's (1991) and Hughes and Hertel's analyses to have overlooked important changes that only become evident once the NSBA data is analyzed by cohorts grouped based on their date of birth. He proposed that it is inappropriate to conclude that skin color difference has a significant impact on outcomes in 1980 when

> a survey of black Americans 18 years and older in 1980 includes many individuals who lived much of their life prior to the Civil Rights period. For older cohorts, educational, occupational and marital outcomes were determined by conditions in existence prior to 1980. … The important question is not whether we observe an overall difference between lighter-skinned and darker-skinned individuals in 1980, but whether this difference has changed for recent cohorts who came of age during and after the Civil Rights period. (p. 160)

With this perspective, Gullickson (2005) conducted analyses of educational and occupational attainment across birth cohorts and spousal education across marital cohorts. He included in his analyses, wherever possible, later waves of the NSBA study that were conducted in 1987-88, 1989-90, and 1992 for waves 2, 3, and 4 respectively. The attrition from the first wave to the latter was significant, however, with the sample

size going from 2,103 respondents in wave 1 to 916, then 771, and finally 644 respondents for waves 2, 3, and 4, respectively.

Gullickson's (2005) educational attainment analysis showed that the difference in years of education between dark- and light-skinned black Americans diminished significantly from the earlier birth cohorts to the latest birth cohorts. Gullickson conducted further analysis that showed an estimated time frame for the beginning of this shift as starting with the cohort born in 1944.

> The models predict that individuals with lighter skin tone historically had more years of education, even compared to someone of the same sex, age, region, and parental background. … [However], this skin tone effect has declined dramatically for younger cohorts. (p. 169)

Gullickson's (2005) occupational analysis showed less strong results with occupational attainment actually getting worse before getting better when the analyses moved from the older to the younger birth cohorts. When using the data from subsequent waves, it does appear that the difference became much less, especially from 1980 to 1987. However, Gullickson acknowledged that "because of the high attrition between Waves I and II, [he] cannot completely rule out that this apparent convergence across periods is an artifact of this attrition" (p. 164).

Of note, however, is that the spousal education analysis produced very different results from those for educational and occupational attainment. "Skin tone differentials in spousal characteristics apparently did not change across marital cohorts" (Gullickson, 2005, p. 171). The darker the respondent's skin, the less educated their spouse. There was some improvement, though, for the cohorts married in the 1960s or later, but Gullickson

states that “the effect of skin color on spousal education was positive and relatively constant throughout the period” (p. 172).

Gullickson (2005) argued convincingly that the educational attainment differential based on skin tone has declined significantly for younger cohorts and that it is important to analyze data by cohort, whenever possible, in order to look for evidence of gradual change. His analysis also leads to a better understanding of Udry et al.’s study in that it is clear that the changes brought about by the Civil Rights movement have made a difference.

However, Gullickson (2005) failed to invalidate the usefulness of Hughes and Hertel’s analysis comparing skin color advantage from the 1950s to the 1980s. That younger cohorts are improved in certain areas is absolutely important, but it does not negate that fact that many in the African American community continue to live with the results of being historically disadvantaged because of their skin color. Indeed, it is not Gullickson’s analysis that is problematic but rather his idea that

> the important question is not whether we observe an overall difference between lighter-skinned and darker-skinned individuals in 1980, but whether this difference has changed for recent cohorts who came of age during and after the Civil Rights period. (p. 160)

Both questions are important and it need not be an either/or situation.

Also, what Gullickson (2005) acknowledged, given the preponderance of evidence showing the continued significance of skin color in the lives of many African Americans (Averhart & Bigler, 1997; Bond & Cash, 1992; Brown, 1998; Haugabrook, 1993; Hill, 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Porter, 1991; Robinson & Ward, 1995) and his own analysis showing minimal change in a spousal education disadvantage for dark-

skinned African Americans, is that "a decline of skin tone differentials does not necessarily imply that prejudice based on skin color has declined" (p. 173).

As a result, I consider the title to Gullickson's (2005) article, *The significance of skin color declines*, to be misleading. I realize that he very likely borrowed his title from one of the key articles that he critiques, *The significance of skin color remains* by Hughes and Hertel (1990), however, both titles are an oversimplification of the issue.

As discussed earlier, skin color bias among African Americans originated with white slave owners and society. It is the white slave owners who established rules and norms about preferences and superiority related to skin color. They are also the ones who established and reinforced the means and opportunities for lighter-skinned African Americans to be advantaged over the darker-skinned. While some of the disadvantage that darker-skinned blacks have experienced has been addressed by the Civil Rights movement, many studies (Averhart & Bigler, 1997; Brown, 1998; Haugabrook, 1993; Bond & Cash, 1992; Hill, 2002; Porter, 1991; Robinson & Ward, 1995) show that skin color bias still exists. Therefore, skin color, in many ways, remains significant though it is important to assess individual outcomes and be aware of the difference between skin color bias and skin color advantage.

Summary of Skin Color Advantage Section

This section reviewed studies that demonstrated the complexity of the issue of skin color advantage as it affects African Americans. On a macro level, skin tone is a predictor of occupation and income (Keith & Herring, 1991) as well as socioeconomic status (Hughes & Hertel, 1990) for African Americans. However, it is also important to analyze data by age cohort to assess for changes over time (Gullickson, 2005). For

additional information on the phenomenon of skin color advantage as it affects African Americans, see also Hill (2000), Hochschild (2006), and Hunter (1998, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

> *The first and most essential step is for each one of us to engage in internal consciousness-raising – if we do not recognize internalized [white supremacy], we can neither overcome nor undo it. (Padilla, 2001, p. 111)*

Internalized Oppression

Internalized oppression has been defined as the socialization of "the oppressed to internalize their oppressed condition and collude with the oppressor's ideology and social system" (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 17). This includes the oppressed group's acceptance of "a definition of themselves that is hurtful and limiting" (p. 21) and often involves self- and group-devaluation as well as "harmful or destructive conduct … directed at other members of the same group" (Padilla, 2004, p. 17).

All forms of oppression can be internalized and racism is one such form. However, in order to address the topic of internalized racism adequately, a brief discussion about the nature of racism is required.

Racism in the United States

Racism in the United States involves the social construction of the modern idea of race in order to privilege those who would be classified by society as white and oppress and exploit all others by promoting, enforcing, supporting, and, sometimes, simply just accepting white supremacist ideologies and the structures that support them. As such, the oppression of racism in the United States is better described as the oppression of white supremacy. White supremacy is often associated with extreme, fanatical, fringe groups that are often violent. However, that is just one manifestation of white supremacy.

Indeed, it is the mystification of "[white supremacist] ideologies" that is "one of the most common, least explained features of [white supremacy]" (Hall, S., 1986, p. 27).

White supremacist beliefs fuel everything from unconscious, dysconscious (King, 1991), conscious, overt, covert, brute, and insidious actions or inactions that support the domination of those who are classified as white in the United States. According to hooks (1995), all who live in the United States live in a "white supremacist capitalist patriarchal society" that survives by attacking "the psyches" of others, including African Americans, in order "to perpetuate and maintain itself" (p. 144).

While those who are oppressed can be considered attacked by this system, all who live in this country are indoctrinated into its ideologies and practices. The twin evils internalized domination (Tappan, 2006) and internalized racism result. An in-depth discussion of internalized domination is outside of the scope of this paper. However, see Hardiman and Jackson (1997), King (1991), Pheterson (1986), Tappan (2006), for a more thorough review of this topic.

Internalized Racism

In light of the above discussion and the identification of the oppression of racism as the oppression of white supremacy, the heinous nature of African Americans internalizing white supremacy becomes that much more apparent. According to Freire (1970/2000), internalized white supremacy could be described as "the oppressed playing 'host' to the oppressor" (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 17). Part of what facilitates members of an oppressed group unknowingly playing "'host' to [their] oppressor[s]" (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997) is white supremacy's all encompassing nature and the integral role it plays in the socialization of those living in the United States.

While the literature uses the term racism much more frequently than white supremacy, there is much in the literature describing this phenomenon's existence on multiple levels including societal/cultural, institutional, personally mediated (interpersonal), and individual (intrapersonal) (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Jones, C. P., 2000). Internalized white supremacy is classified on the individual (intrapersonal) level. It exists when those who are grouped into the socially constructed categories of race and are oppressed by white supremacist ideologies become conditioned to believe, accept, even endorse, and act on those ideologies (Bivens, 1995; Comas-Diaz, 2000; Harper, 2006; Jones, C. P., 2000; United to End Racism, 2001; Weisglass, 2001). These ideologies include negative messages, "misinformation" (Alleyne, 2004, p. 49), and stereotypes about the oppressed groups' "abilities and intrinsic worth" (Jones, C. P., 2000, p. 1213). They also rest on an "assumptive base of [the] inferiority" of the oppressed (Watts-Jones, 2002, p. 592). By internalizing these beliefs, the oppressed unknowingly support "the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group" by reinforcing "the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group's power" (Bivens, 1995, p. 2).

White supremacy and the internalization of white supremacy are "deeply embedded in America's history" (Padilla, 2001, p. 99) and culture. As such, it is important to view "internalized [white supremacy] as a systemic oppression" because this distinguishes it

> from human wounds like self-hatred or 'low self esteem' to which all people are vulnerable. It is [also] important to understand it as systemic because that makes it clear that it is not a problem simply of individuals. It is structural. Thus, even people of color who have "high self-esteem" must grapple with internalized [white supremacy]." (Bivens, 1995, p. 1)

The forceful influence of internalized white supremacy lies partly in the acceptance of shame -- in the often unconscious "acceptance of the 'I am something wrong' identity …. [Further,] the psychic problem with the internalization of shame is that it is often in conflict with who [a person knows themselves to be]" (Chapman, 2006, p. 221).

Other examples from the many effects that individuals experience as a result of internalized white supremacy are self-hatred and also "complex defensive interpersonal behaviours that influence and impair quality of life" (Alleyne, 2004, p. 49). These include "stratification by skin tone within communities of color" (Jones, C. P., 2000, p. 1213), preference for lighter skin color (Thompson, M. S., & Keith, 2001), stereotyping (Bivens, 1995), "racial slurs as nicknames, rejection of ancestral culture, and fratricide" (Jones, C. P., 2000, p. 1213).

Another effect of internalized white supremacy is not believing in one's own ability or potential and a corresponding lack of belief in the ability or potential of others who suffer similar oppression (Jones, C. P., 2000; Lipsky, 1977). The complementary belief to this is an automatic belief that all persons in the dominating group are more capable, more intelligent, or better able to provide the services one needs.

While there are many other manifestations of internalized white supremacy, it is evident in all of them that members of the oppressed group are led to mistreat themselves and other members of the same group "in the same ways that [they have been] mistreated as the targets of [white supremacy]" (United to End Racism, 2001, p. 1; see also Padilla, 2004). Unfortunately, these effects also serve to undermine the ability of the oppressed to

engage in collaborative action that would help them move toward liberation (Freire, 1970/2000; Jones, C. P., 2000; Lipsky, 1977).

Practical and Clinical Significance

Introduction to the Practical Significance of Skin Color Bias

To understand the practical significance of skin color bias, the following section will review the origins of skin color difference within the African American community, the manifestation of this difference within African American families, and the impact that internalization of the historical meanings associated with skin color difference has had on African Americans. This section will also review the results of internalized skin color bias, the socialization of new generations into this belief system, and the taboo nature of skin color bias within the African American community.

Practical Significance of Skin Color Bias

As mentioned previously, the complexity and difficulty around skin color difference can be traced to (a) the history of typically forced sexual relations between enslaved females of African descent and their white male slave owners and (b) the ensuing response from the dominating group regarding how to handle issues of ownership (for the slave owner) and rights of inheritance (for the offspring of this union). The dominating group's decision to classify their offspring with those of solely African descent highlights more clearly that the former slave category of Negro (later renamed as Colored, then Black, then Afro-American, and, now, African American) is more a category of caste than any precise designation of race (Brown, Gillem, Robbins, & Lafleur, 2003; Getman, 1984; Hickman, 1997; Hollinger, 2003; hooks, 1995; Hunter,

1998; Nelson, 1986; Porter, 1985; Watts & Serrano-Garcia, 2003; Whaley, 2001; Williams, Z. A., 2006).

As a result, the range of skin color difference in this category is quite broad. And due to the law of genetics, "African American families often have a range of skin pigmentation represented within the immediate and/or extended family" (Boyd-Franklin, 2003, p. 45; cf. Joyner, 1991). It is also "quite possible for a number of children of the same parents to range in skin color from very fair to very dark" (p. 45). And, as wide as the range in skin color can be, so can be the range of responses from families. In some families, light skin color is held in special regard, while in others, dark skin color may be preferred and light skin viewed as a reminder of the awful conditions under which miscegenation often took place (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; cf. Joyner, 1991). In others, as research has suggested, family members may prefer medium brown skin tones (Coard, 1997; Porter, 1991; see also Robinson & Ward, 1995).

Internalization of Historical Meanings Associated with Skin Color Difference

However, it is not these differences that are the primary focus of this study. Instead, the primary focus is on the meanings that have become associated with this range of skin colors and how these meanings continue to be perpetuated by and within the African American community. These meanings relate to the assignment of value to a particular skin color and of worth to the person possessing it and were originally placed on those skin color differences by slave-owning members of the dominating group in the United States. Ultimately, these meanings came to be internalized by the enslaved and their descendants and have proved devastating as the oppressed have helped to perpetuate their own oppression. (While the perpetuation of this bias is not without considerable

influence by the dominating group, research in that area is outside the scope of this study.)

Given the historical and continued advantages afforded African Americans with lighter skin and the internalization, by light- and dark-skinned African Americans, of racist beliefs about the inferiority of darker-skinned African Americans, intra-"racial" relations are too frequently colored by discrimination (Davis et al., 1998; hooks, 2006; Watson, 1999) and pain. And while this subject is clearly painful on a societal level, it becomes even more so when society's white supremacist beliefs are internalized by African Americans and played out in their families, peer groups, and community.

As Russell et al. (1992) pointed out, "Black children quickly absorb the guilt, anger, jealousy, and depression generated in their families by an unresolved color complex" (p. 95). These responses can also introduce inappropriate feelings of self-pride or self-hate that can be traced back to internalized white supremacist ideologies.

Children also receive messages about their skin color from outside of their families and often "experience teasing not within their families but in their peer group and in the community" (Boyd-Franklin, 2003, p. 45). This is true whether the individual is dark-skinned or light-skinned. Boyd-Franklin, looking at both sides of this experience of being different, wrote that "dark-skinned African Americans may remember painful experiences as children or even as adults when they felt rejected by family members, peers, and members of their communities" (p. 43). At the same time, she pointed out that "being light-skinned in certain African American families can lead to privileges, but it can also result in unique problems and feelings of rejection. The need for identification and a sense of belonging is an important emotional issue for everyone" (p. 44). It is this

need for a sense of belonging that must be attended to in African American families and in the community.

The form of internalized white supremacy known as skin color bias has long been a source of tension and shame and is a subject that is generally considered taboo (Boyd-Franklin, 1991; Davis et al., 1998; Hall, R. E., 1992; Haugabrook, 1993; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Parrish, 1946; Russell et al., 1992; Tillman, 2002; Wade & Bielitz, 2005; Watson, 1999; Williams, A. L., 1996). However, as with many other realities, ceasing to speak of it does not diminish its significance. Further, what is significant in our society, in our families, and inside ourselves is, without fail, also significant in the consulting room (Pérez Foster, 1998, 1999). Therefore, further understanding on this issue is important not only for African American families and individuals but also for the mental health clinicians who are working with them.

Introduction to the Clinical Significance of Skin Color Bias

To understand the clinical significance of skin color bias, the following section will review the mental health profession's general neglect of this topic in spite of the influence skin color bias has on intrapsychic and interpersonal processes. This section will also review the difficulty that can be expected to accompany attempts at addressing this issue within the consulting room and provides some guiding principles and practical advice for clinicians. This section ends with a review of the need for change in the curricula of the mental health profession and with a discussion of theories currently espoused by those already seeking to do this work.

Clinical Significance of Skin Color Bias

The literature has addressed, however sparingly, the impact of white supremacy on mental health and has deemed it a legitimate contributor to psychological distress (Bulhan, 1985; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; hooks, 1995; Klonoff, Landrine, & Ullman, 1999; Williams, D. R., & Williams-Morris, 2000). With skin color bias being a derivative of white supremacy (Harvey, 1995; hooks, 1995; Wade & Bielitz, 2005; Watson, 1999), it seems reasonable to suggest that skin color bias would also contribute to psychological distress, though the literature is empirically silent on this issue. Tummala-Narra (2007) observed that "subtle … aspects of clients' experiences, such as skin color, have been more or less neglected in the psychotherapy literature" (p. 255). And, in spite of its relevance "to most cultures around the world," (p. 256; see also Hall, R. E., 1992) skin color is often the "elephant in the therapy room" (p. 258). In addition, Hamilton-Mason (2004) noted that traditional mental health assessment tools, which exist to help clinicians understand the nature of their clients' problems and gain insight into how to assist their clients in these areas, are inherently biased and do not take into account many cultural aspects of our clients' experiences.

This is unfortunate given the extent to which skin color bias can influence intrapsychic processes (Harvey, 1995; hooks, 1995; Kelly & Boyd-Franklin, 2005; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Thompson, C. L., 1995; Tummala-Narra, 2007) as well as family dynamics (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Greene, 1990a, 1990b; Hamilton-Mason, 2004; hooks, 1995; Thompson, C. L., 1995; Tummala-Narra, 2007; Watson, 1999). Clinicians in the literature have written about case after case where they noted devaluation, idealization, "rifts, pseudoalliances, and triangulations" (Tummala-Narra, 2007, p. 262) in families

because of skin color bias as well as residual feelings of unattractiveness, guilt, shame, pride, superiority, and inferiority that their clients carry with them influencing who they are and how they interact with others (Hamilton-Mason, 2004; Harvey, 1995; Leary, 2000; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Thompson, C. L., 1995; Tummala-Narra, 2007; Watson, 1999; Williams, A. L., 1996).

While it is clear that skin color bias may well have played an important role in many of our clients' lives, it remains no less difficult to bring up and discuss than any other issues related to white supremacy. In our clients' lives, and in the lives of those in our respective communities, skin color bias is not easily or regularly discussed (Davis et al., 1998; Hall, R. E., 1992; Haugabrook, 1993; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Russell et al., 1992; Tillman, 2002; Wade & Bielitz, 2005; Watson, 1999; Williams, A. L., 1996). Tummala-Narra (2007) noted that "there is a lack of sense of safety in discussing skin color, for both ethnic minority and White individuals" (p. 263). A. L. Williams (1996) further added that skin color bias is "a charged issue" that "can evoke very powerful and painful feelings among African Americans" (p. 211). All of this will also be true in the consulting room. There will be a "lack of a sense of safety" in discussing skin color bias and it may well be a "charged" and emotional issue for our clients and/or for ourselves. While all of this is true, assessing the meaning of skin color in our clients' lives and the role it has played, if any, is critically important (Tummala-Narra, 2007; Watson, 1999) for, when it has played a role, it has often done so with life-altering, sometimes even devastating, results.

Addressing Skin Color Bias Clinically

When preparing to address this issue, there are many facets for clinicians to consider, just a few of which will be touched upon here. Alluded to above, one of the most important things for clinicians to do is to take the time to explore the biases, prejudices, and hurts related to skin color that lie within themselves (Edwards & Bess, 1998; Hall, R. E., 1992; Hall, R. E., 2005; Hamilton-Mason, 2004; Pérez Foster, 1998, 1999; Thompson, C. L., 1995). Hamilton-Mason (2004) wisely wrote that practitioners

> need to recognize that understanding their personal values, as well as their cultural and religious beliefs, is a complex and difficult task, which involves a willingness to inquire deeply into previously unexamined attitudes and experiences. However, commitment to the profession demands that each practitioner, on an individual basis, undertake this process. Gaining insight and self-awareness in the area of one's own values and biases … is a central focus of professional practice and a lifelong task. (p. 329).

Highlighting the importance of self-awareness, C. L. Thompson (1995) wrote about a case that "centered around the issue of skin color" and represented her "most obvious treatment failure" (p. 537).

> Ms. F, a 40-year-old Black single woman who was an elementary school teacher entered treatment with me because I was a provider available to her through her insurance company. She quickly used skin color as a resistance. This woman was moderately paranoid, a condition with which I had had previous success. When I attempted to support her ideas, but questioned the possibility that multiple conclusions could be drawn from the initial data, I was met with a rageful attack about my being jealous of her light skin and hazel eyes. This attack reverberated with years-old distress in my family of origin, in which skin color had been the only recognized form of achievement. My own family openly disliked brown skin. I often felt disregarded around my achievements because I thought that the family would have preferred to see success in my lighter skinned relatives. I had no distance from this confrontation and felt reduced to a pile of rubble. Even though I understood the patient's behavior to reflect her defensiveness, most specifically, I felt the patient was worried about being seen as crazy.
>
> Ms. F left with her pain and left me realizing that I had an area that had to be analyzed so that I could maintain better therapeutic neutrality (Eissler, 1953/1981;

> Lightfoot, 1988). My own struggle with the issue has helped me appreciate the complexity of the Black experience of skin color. (p. 537)

In addition to the importance of becoming aware of sensitive areas in a clinician's own history, Pérez Foster (1998, 1999), in her articles on cross cultural countertransference, has noted that that which is unspoken, repressed, or defended against in the therapist, will often be "unconsciously enacted" (1998, p. 261) in the consulting room. This is, of course, the opposite of what a clinician would want or intend but may lead to an impasse or even premature termination (Pérez Foster, 1998, 1999).

In speaking of the importance of self-awareness relative to professional training, Edwards and Bess (1998) expressed sentiments very similar to those of Hamilton-Mason (2004).

> The development of a therapist's self-awareness must carry at least as much weight in his or her professional education and training as the accumulation of knowledge about theories and methodologies established by the leaders of the profession. (p. 98)

In addition to the importance of self-awareness, it is equally important that clinicians be aware of the meaning of skin color *to each of their clients*. As A. L. Williams (1996) pointed out, the meaning of skin color is contextual and holds meaning only in relationship to and with other people. It is strongly influenced by the preferences or neutrality of a person's family and the region in which he or she grew up (Williams, A. L., 1996). Because of this, the therapist should not assume that the client's experiences around skin color have been stereotypical (Thompson, C. L., 1995; Williams, A. L., 1996). In fact, Hamilton-Mason (2004) described a situation in which her client's experiences were counterstereotypical.

> D is a 36 year old, heterosexual, single, working class African-American woman, who is light skinned, overweight and of average height. The dynamic formulation, based on D's struggles, focuses on urges formed early in terms of her biological (bodily) and family experience of being defined and treated as different. She has experiences of being perceived as bad in terms of skin color and personality that pushed her to be autonomous early on. (p. 321)

> … one of the significant factors was D's complexion. If one were to interpret that factor as it is generally understood in a broader social context, being light skinned would have afforded her certain privileges. But using the tools of psychoanalytic theory we come to understand that for D, the meaning of her light-skinned complexion is reversed. In her family, light skin was stigmatized, and darker skin was valorized. Therefore, as her [dark skinned, African American] therapist, my skin color was also valorized. The client's transference to me was as a lost object. She idealized me… (p. 323).

As is evident in this excerpt, it was of paramount importance for D's clinician to explore and ascertain the specific and individual meaning of skin color to D. This exploration will be equally important for each clinician to do with each of their clients.

In addition, Tummala-Narra (2007) provided some practical recommendations related to approaching the issue of skin color with clients.

> One way to explore the range of possibilities related to meanings of skin color in our clients' lives is to inquire about early memories of skin color. Clients may not be aware of how these issues affect them and their interpersonal relationships (Boyd-Franklin, 1989; West, 1995). Another way is to attend to skin color as it is understood in the client's family system (nuclear and extended) and larger social environment (economic, educational). Several variables interact to produce the effects of skin color in one's psychological life. (p. 267)

However, Tummala-Narra (2007) also noted that it is important for clinicians not to rely solely on their clients for information about issues related to skin color. They need to search the literature and yet avoid making overgeneralizations (Tummala-Narra, 2007). They also need to be aware of societal influences on this issue, both historical and current. And finally, La Roche and Maxie (2003) have reminded us that the role skin

color plays within a client's life and within the consulting room, as well as its meaning, may even vary throughout the course of treatment.

Changes and Updates to Mental Health Curriculums are Imperative

Given the above discussion on the clinical significance of skin color bias and the potential complexity of the issue both individually, for clinician and client, and collectively, in the therapeutic dyad, it is apparent that the mental health fields must work to incorporate training on skin color issues into their curriculums (Hall, R. E., 1992; Harvey, 1995). Pérez Foster (1998) elucidated the need for enhanced training on this and other cultural issues given that mere assent to its need will rarely translate into improved treatment outcomes.

> The mental health field's charge to elaborate and deliver culturally relevant therapeutic interventions must not naively assume that [the] therapist's conscious desire to do so automatically defuses their complex emotional biases about others or their discomforts about their own ethnicity. For these reactions hover in preconscious experience and intersubjective communication with the client. The notion of "culturally competent service delivery" must soberly integrate this psychodynamic factor and understand that the dynamics of the clinician's own culture-related conflicts will exert a formidable influence on their practice interventions. (pp. 264-265)

Helpful Theoretical Models

Many clinicians in the literature have recommended intersubjective or relational theoretical models as helpful approaches (Hamilton-Mason, 2004; Pérez Foster, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2007; Williams, A. L., 1996). This is primarily due to these theories' inherent acknowledgement of the culture, worldview, and experiences of both clinician and client as well as the "constant interaction" (Williams, A. L., 1996, p. 219) and "mutual influence" (Tummala-Narra, 2007, p. 267) that exists within the therapeutic dyad.

Summary of Practical and Clinical Significance Section

With regard to the practical significance of skin color bias, this section reviewed the origins of skin color difference within the African American community, the manifestation of this difference within African American families, and the impact that internalization of the historical meanings associated skin color difference has had on African Americans. This section also reviewed the results of internalized skin color bias, the socialization of new generations into this belief system, and the taboo nature of skin color bias within the African American community.

With regard to the clinical significance of skin color bias, this section reviewed the mental health profession's general neglect of this topic in spite of the influence skin color bias has on intrapsychic and interpersonal processes. This section also reviewed the difficulty that can be expected to accompany attempts at addressing this issue within the consulting room and provided some guiding principles and practical advice for clinicians. Finally, this section ended with a review of the need for change in the curricula of the mental health profession and with a discussion of theories currently espoused by those already seeking to do this work.

Summary

When the modernized concept of race, along with the white supremacist ideologies it was socially constructed to support, was combined with (a) the brutal enslavement of Africans and their descendants, (b) the conception of, and publicly vigorous opposition to, miscegenation, and (c) the social construction of the rule of hypodescent, many terrible results were produced. These results included the activation, in the United States, of a multi-tiered, skin color based system used to judge physical

attractiveness as well as inherent value and worth. The harmful internalization by African Americans of this white supremacist, skin color based ranking system has resulted in a continuing legacy of skin color bias and attendant divisiveness within the African American community.

Studies looking at skin color difference among African Americans (e.g., Averhart & Bigler, 1997; Hill, 2000; Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Hunter, 1998, 2002; Keith & Herring, 1991; Maddox & Gray, 2002; Porter, 1991) have tended to cluster around two main themes: noting whether there was an advantage or disadvantage in being a particular skin color or noting whether African Americans had a preference for being a particular skin color. While the literature touches on the taboo and distressing nature of skin color bias within the African American community, it does not contain any studies on the actual perpetuation of skin color bias within the African American community.

Using the theoretical lens of internalized white supremacy this study sought to ascertain the kinds of messages that African Americans have been exposed to that introduced them to the existence and reality of skin color bias *within* the African American community. This included (a) identifying the time frame during which participants were first exposed to skin color bias from within the African American community, (b) identifying the source (whether from parenting caregivers, extended family, siblings, peers, neighbors, teachers, or from some other source), (c) exploring the nature of those exposures, and (d) exploring the efforts African American parenting caregivers and other African Americans have made to try to protect younger generations of African Americans from the impact of skin color bias coming from within the African American community. The narratives provided by this study's participants have provided

a window into these aspects of skin color bias and may help to provide a means for critical consciousness that allows the African American community to transform the kinds of narratives the next generation will give.

In the following chapter, the methodology for this study will be discussed. Included in that discussion will be (a) an explanation of this study's research design and sampling techniques; (b) a description of this study's sample size and selection criteria; (c) a description of this study's data collection instrument, informed consent procedures, and screening process; (d) an analysis of the reliability and validity of the measurements used in this study; (e) a discussion of this study's methods of data analysis; and (f) a discussion of the strengths and limitations of this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the kinds of messages that African Americans have been exposed to that introduced them to the existence and reality of skin color bias *within* the African American community. This included (a) identifying the time frame during which participants were first exposed to skin color bias from within the African American community, (b) identifying the source (whether from parenting caregivers, extended family, siblings, peers, neighbors, teachers, or from some other source), (c) exploring the nature of those exposures, and (d) exploring the efforts African American parenting caregivers and other African Americans have made to try to protect younger generations of African Americans from the impact of skin color bias coming from within the African American community.

For the purposes of this study, skin color bias within the African American community was defined as a preference for a particular skin color and/or the demonstration of positive or negative attitudes toward other African Americans based on their skin color. Given the theoretical lens of internalized white supremacy and the long history of skin color bias in the United States, it was expected that this study would show (a) that African Americans were still being exposed to skin color bias from within the African American community and (b) that these exposures primarily echoed the persistent white supremacist viewpoint that darker-skinned African Americans are

inferior to those with lighter skin in terms of physical attractiveness, intelligence, value, and worth.

Research Design

Because the purpose of the study was to "develop a better understanding" (Anastas, 1999, p. 123) about early exposure to skin color bias within the African American community, this study used a descriptive, fixed method research design in the form of an online survey instrument. Further, due to the relatively unstudied nature of skin color bias, the research method design was mixed and the survey instrument contained both a quantitative and a qualitative section.

The quantitative section comprised demographic questions along with other questions that contributed to a better understanding of the makeup of the participants (see Appendix A for survey instrument). The qualitative section consisted of open-ended questions that allowed participants to provide, without restriction, a description of their experience of skin color bias. Narrative responses were coded for themes that provided an enhanced understanding of skin color bias and will guide future research in this area.

Sampling Techniques

This study used nonprobability convenience methods of sampling and primarily recruited participants using the snowball sampling technique. Following project approval from the Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC) at Smith College School for Social Work (see Appendix B for a copy of the HSRC's approval letter for this study), a convenience sample of African American participants was recruited through this researcher's personal circle of contacts.

The request for participation was distributed via e-mail and those personally solicited received two e-mails. The first e-mail was tailored specifically to the recipients and, depending on whether they had already agreed to help, thanked the e-mail recipients for their willingness to help (see Appendix C) or for their willingness to consider the request (see Appendix D). This first e-mail outlined the two ways in which recipients could best help: (a) by participating, if they were willing and met criteria, and/or (b) by forwarding the request for participation e-mail to those within their circles of contact who might be willing to participate in the study.

The first e-mail also explained that they would receive a separate, and generic, request to participate e-mail that contained more details about the study as well as the link to the survey. The first e-mail further explained that this was designed to make it easier for them to forward the request to participate e-mail to others. All individual recipients subsequently received, as a separate e-mail, the request to participate e-mail (see Appendix E).

Solicitation also took place through phone contact and face-to-face contact. In these cases, the potential participant provided an e-mail address and the above-described solicitation process was followed. Other methods of solicitation included a solicitation letter that was included in a local church newsletter as well as a contact at a local historically black university who agreed to distribute a solicitation letter to students and others in her circle of contact. The generic request for participation e-mail was used in each case and was tailored only slightly for the specific audience (see Appendix E).

Because this study's data were derived from a nonprobability convenience sampling method, study results are not generalizable and should not be considered as

representative of all African Americans. However, the data collected have provided insight into the relational and intrapsychic impact of skin color bias for the segment of African Americans who participated in this study.

Sample

Sample Size

Out of the 165 potential participants who visited the online survey and completed the informed consent form (see Appendix F), 41 potential participants were not included in the sample. These individuals were (a) those who did not meet inclusionary criteria and were exited from the survey before reaching the essay questions (17 potential participants), (b) those who exited the survey before answering all the exclusionary criteria questions (8 potential participants), (c) those who met inclusionary criteria but exited the survey before answering the essay questions (11 potential participants), and (d) those who went through the survey but did not answer any essay questions (5 participants).

The remaining 124 participants met the exclusionary criteria and answered at least one essay question. However, out of the 124 participants who answered at least one essay question, 31 responded with answers that did not address skin color bias at all (most of these responses addressed racist treatment from whites). This left 93 participants who addressed skin color bias in either the early exposure to skin color bias essay question or in the protective socialization essay questions. Demographic data for these 93 participants are presented in the Findings Chapter and in Appendix G and the percentages there provided have been calculated using an *n* comprised of these 93 participants.

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria for the sample were as follows: individuals (a) who were 18 years of age or older, (b) who identified as African American, (c) who had lived only in the continental United States from birth through age 18, (d) who considered their parenting caregiver(s) to be African American, and (e) whose parenting caregiver(s) had also lived only in the continental United States from birth through age 18. Participants also had to be English-speaking and have access to a computer and the internet in order to complete the survey.

These selection criteria were specifically chosen because there are many peoples of African descent residing in the continental United States who have widely differing backgrounds and experiences (Phelps, Taylor, & Gerard, 2001) that impact how they view skin color difference (see, for example, Safa, 1998). While there may be some overarching similarities among them, this study focused on a particular subset from this group in order to reduce the number of controllable reasons for disparity in the responses of the participants.

As a result, these criteria excluded individuals who identify as West Indian, Caribbean, or Caribbean American, were born and/or raised in African nations, or are from any other part of the African diaspora other than descendants of Africans who were enslaved in the continental United States. These criteria also excluded individuals who have at least one parent who is not African American.

Other Influencing Factors

Many additional participant characteristics were expected to influence the messages participants received about their skin color, including (a) the age of the

participant and the era in which they grew up, (b) the region of the country and type of community in which they spent most of their formative years (birth through age 18), (c) the predominant socioeconomic status of the participant's family during the participant's formative years (birth through age 18), (d) the highest level of education the participant and their parenting caregiver(s) completed, (e) the degree to which the participants' parenting caregiver(s) socialized their children about skin color bias, (f) the gender of the participant, and (g) whether the participant perceived themselves to have been lighter- or darker-skinned than their parenting caregiver(s) or siblings.

While no participants were excluded based on the above characteristics, the survey instrument attempted to collect much of this information from each participant in an effort to facilitate the identification of sub-themes within the data. Indeed, Keith and Herring (1991) noted that "characteristics such as sex, region [of the United States], urbanicity, and age" (p. 773) impacted their analysis of the effects of skin color on key outcomes such as education, occupation, and income.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected for this study using an online survey instrument that was divided into three sections: screening demographic and exclusionary criteria questions, short essay questions, and additional demographic questions. Participants were able to access the survey using the URL provided in the solicitation e-mails.

Informed Consent Procedures

Before viewing any questions, participants were provided with an informed consent letter (see Appendix F) on the first page of the survey. This letter contained information describing the purpose of the study, eligibility requirements, protections and

limitations related to anonymity and confidentiality, and the risks and benefits of participation. Participants were then able to electronically indicate whether they consented to participate in the study by selecting “I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE” or “I DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE.” Potential participants were encouraged to print a copy of the informed consent letter before taking the survey. After choosing whether to print the informed consent form, the potential participant would have clicked on the “Next>>” button to get to the actual survey. If the potential participant had selected “I DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE,” they were forwarded to the final page of the survey after clicking the “Next>>” button. On this page, potential and actual participants were provided with “resources for counseling and support” in case “participation in any portion of the survey caused them discomfort” (Geller, 2007, p. 25).

Screening Process and Exclusionary Criteria

The next pages made up the first section of the survey instrument and contained screening demographic questions that were designed to address the study’s exclusionary criteria. Participants were forwarded to the final page of the survey if they were not at least 18 years of age, did not identify as African American, did not live only in the continental United States from birth through age 18, did not consider their parenting caregiver(s) to be African American, or if they indicated that their parenting caregiver(s) did not live only in the continental United States from birth through age 18.

Qualitative Data Collection

The second section of the survey consisted of short essay questions. The first short essay question was designed to solicit the participants’ earliest and most noteworthy experiences in which they were exposed to skin color bias. The next two short essay

questions were designed to solicit whether participants felt that anyone had ever talked with them, or done other things, that the participants felt helped protect them from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community.

These questions were followed by the third section of the survey containing questions related to (a) who the participants' parenting caregiver(s) were, (b) the regions of the United States in which the participants and their parenting caregiver(s) grew up, (c) the participants' socioeconomic statuses growing up, (d) the highest level of education the participants and their parenting caregiver(s) had completed, (e) the gender of the participants and their parenting caregiver(s), and (f) the participant-perceived skin color of participants and their parenting caregiver(s). The participant's age had already been collected in the initial screening questions.

The survey instrument ended with an open-ended question that would allow participants to provide, if they were interested in doing so, any other information related to (a) skin color bias within the African American community, (b) their personal experiences with skin color bias, or (c) the survey. Throughout the survey, participants could exit the survey at any point by closing the web browser or by clicking on the "Exit this survey >>" link in the upper right corner of each page of the survey. The full survey instrument can be found in Appendix A of this document.

Reliability and Validity of the Measurements Employed

Demographic Questions

All of the demographic questions were valid and most were highly reliable. The demographic questions related to (a) the participants' ages, (b) who the participants' parenting caregiver(s) were, (c) whether the participants and their parenting caregiver(s)

lived only in the continental United States from birth through age 18, (d) the state in which the participants and their parenting caregiver(s) had grown up, (e) the gender of participants and participants' parenting caregiver(s), and (f) the highest level of education the participants and their parenting caregiver(s) had completed were all considered highly reliable in that participant responses would be highly replicable and contain "a high proportion of truth and a low proportion of error" (Anastas, 1999, p. 316).

Other demographic questions were more subjective though still considered to be fairly reliable. These questions included (a) whether the participants considered themselves and their parenting caregiver(s) to be African American and (b) the participants' socioeconomic statuses growing up.

The questions about the skin color of the participants and their parenting caregiver(s) were highly subjective though still fairly reliable given that most participants already had a concept of their skin color relative to other African Americans they knew. However, it is possible that this subjective assessment would not match a more objective assessment that also included all African Americans in the reference pool instead of only those whom the participants knew.

Short Essay Questions

The short essay questions, by their very nature, were also subjective and thus subject to participant interpretation. While these questions were fairly reliable, their face validity was greatly impacted by the subjective nature of the questions.

The primary essay question asked participants to describe their earliest and most noteworthy experiences in which they were exposed to skin color bias. Participant responses suggested that, although the question would produce generally reliable

responses (i.e., while subjective, the responses would still contain a high proportion of what the participants considered to be truth), the question was not highly valid. The most common alternate interpretation of the question resulted in responses that addressed racism rather than skin color bias.

The secondary essay questions asked participants whether their parenting caregiver(s), or anyone else, had ever talked with them, or done other things, that they felt helped protect them from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community. Participants were first asked to indicate whether this had taken place by selecting "Yes" or "No." If they had answered "Yes," they were then asked to describe what had been said or done.

This question was intended to assess whether parenting caregiver(s), or others within the African American community, were socializing young people to provide inoculation against the internalization of skin color bias. However, a small number of participants who answered "Yes" described actions on the part of the parenting caregiver(s) or others that actually served to reinforce skin color bias rather than inoculate against it. Thus, the validity of these secondary essay questions is suspect although the responses provide insight into the range of behaviors and thought patterns that some African Americans may consider protective with regard to skin color bias.

Analysis of the Data

After the data collection period ended, the data, which were completely anonymous, were downloaded for analysis. This study used descriptive statistics to analyze the demographic data and a thematic coding process to analyze the narrative data collected in the short essay section of the survey.

Analysis of Demographic Data

Participants' (a) ages, (b) genders, (c) self-perceived skin colors, (d) states of the United States in which they spent the most time growing up (birth through age 18), (e) predominant socioeconomic statuses while growing up (birth through age 18), and (f) highest levels of education attained at the time of the survey were analyzed in order to provide summary level detail for this study. Frequency distributions were calculated in each of the above demographic categories and, to facilitate this analysis, the raw data for the age and state categories was grouped into ranges and regions, respectively. (See Appendix H for the regional assignments that were used for each state.)

Reduction of Narrative Data

The narrative data analysis process began with a thorough review of all collected data for the purposes of determining an initial focus for the analysis and for identifying "predominant themes, exemplary selections, and differences among the participants' responses" (Jiménez, 2006, p. 35). This kind of "impressionistic reexamination of the data as a whole" (Anastas, 1999, p. 419) was repeated throughout the data analysis process.

During the process of coding the narrative data, it was reduced to "conceptual categories into which parts of the text [could] be grouped and in terms of which the text [could] be described or displayed" (Anastas, 1999, pp. 419-420). For the purposes of this study, themes were used as the unit of analysis and the aim of the analysis was to make the themes as useful to the purpose of the research as possible and as small as could meaningfully stand alone. The goal was to reach saturation with the thematic coding scheme where "no additional codes [were] needed to capture the participants'

experiences and meanings" (Drisko, 1997, p.193). The names for the thematic codes, whether *in vivo* or constructed, were determined during the processes of data collection and analysis. In addition, "examples of the codes or concepts in the words of the research participants" (Anastas, 1999, p. 427) have been included in the findings chapter to strengthen the validity of the primary coding categories selected as conceptual themes.

Strengths and Limitations of Study Methods

Key strengths resulting from utilizing an online survey instrument to conduct this study were its ability to reach a large number of people in a short amount of time with a means of participation that was "easy and convenient" (Bell, 2007, p. 18) as well as anonymous. In addition, given the sensitive nature of the topic and that skin color bias is an interpersonal phenomenon, the ability to participate in the study privately and without any interaction was possibly beneficial.

Nonetheless, the use of an online survey instrument prevented a certain number of potential participants from participating since no accommodations were made for offline participation. Those without computers or internet access or who could not type well or simply did not like to type were disparately impacted by the use of an online survey instrument. Indeed, there are participants who may have been freer with their descriptions if they could have talked about them instead of having had to type them.

In addition, because the study's questions were delivered and answered in the form of an online survey rather than in a live interview, follow-up questions were not possible. Also, the use of a fixed research method prevented adjustments based on early respondent feedback. Furthermore, participants interpreted questions differently than intended but were without the opportunity to receive immediate clarification. An

additional limitation related to the mostly beneficial anonymity that was provided to all participants was the inability to member check as findings were analyzed.

Moreover, the study was of limited generalizability because of the size and nonrandomized nature of the sample. As a result, it is unlikely that participants reflect the general population of African Americans. This limitation was most likely manifested with study variables such age, gender, education completed, socioeconomic status, region of United States growing up, and self-perceived skin color.

However, generalizability and statistical significance were not goals of the study. The goals of the study were, instead, to generate valuable descriptive and "qualitative data that would stimulate questions" (Jiménez, 2006, p. 78). This would help increase understanding and expand the available literature concerning skin color bias in the African American community.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

If you're white, you're right.
If you're yellow, you're mellow.
If you're brown, stick around.
If you're black, get back.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the kinds of messages that African Americans have been exposed to that introduced them to the existence and reality of skin color bias *within* the African American community. It is notable that variants of the rhyme used to begin this chapter were referenced by two participants in this study as well as in some of the literature reviewed for this study (see Brown, 1998; Davis et al, 1998; Jones, T., 2000; Lake, 2003; Maddox & Gray, 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Parrish, 1946). This rhyme effectively encapsulates participant responses in this study as well as the intraracial tension produced by the oppression of white supremacy which includes the practice of hypodescent.

Participants were presented with two research questions in this study. The first asked participants to describe the earliest and most noteworthy experiences in which they were exposed to skin color bias from within the African American community. The second asked participants whether and how they felt they had been protectively socialized against the impact of skin color bias from within the African American community.

Participant responses to the first question regarding early and noteworthy exposure to skin color bias from within the African American community contained five

major findings that specifically related to skin color bias. First, participants most frequently described early exposure to skin color bias as taking place during elementary school years, coming from their peers, and involving teasing, ridicule, and mistreatment. Second, participants described advantages and privileges shown to light-skinned African Americans from within the African American community. These privileges included preferential treatment, presumed beauty, and being selected more often to participate in dating or other types of relationships. Third, many of the aforementioned biased behaviors were described as being replicated within African American families, both nuclear and extended, whenever skin color difference existed within those families. Fourth, in participant reports of their own thoughts about skin color or their own skin color bias, the overall trend was that lighter skin was preferred or considered advantaged. If skin color bias was described as exhibited by the participant, self-blame was included in their response. Fifth, some participants stated they had not experienced skin color bias or were not able to recall instances where they had been exposed to it.

Participant responses to the early and noteworthy exposure to skin color bias question also contained two notable findings outside of those related to skin color bias. First, participants regularly mentioned hair texture bias as an issue, if not *the* issue, that they encountered. Second, a significant number of participants responded with answers that did not address skin color bias at all. The majority of these responses addressed racist treatment from whites.

Participant responses to the second study question regarding whether participants felt they had been protectively socialized against the impact of skin color bias from within the African American community contained four major findings. First, 51% stated

they had not had parenting caregiver(s) or anyone else talk with them or do anything else that they felt helped protect them from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community. The 49% of participants who felt they had been protectively socialized in one way or another described a variety of efforts put forth on their behalf by influential others. These influential others included their parenting caregiver(s), extended family, or individuals outside their family. Second, participants who felt protectively socialized frequently described the nature of many of these efforts as educational. These educational efforts included influential others teaching participants (a) how to think about themselves with regard to their skin color, (b) about the existence of skin color bias and how to think about it, (c) about African American history and the importance of taking pride in their culture, and (d) how to think about other African Americans who demonstrated skin color bias.

Third, participants described different environments, whether in or outside of the home, that they found to be protective. These environments included those shaped by specific parenting caregiver behaviors as well as those outside the home that participants experienced as accepting or empowering. In addition, a few participants found a lack of skin color bias as "an issue" in their home or neighborhood environments to be protective. Fourth, a small number of responses from those who stated they had been protectively socialized reflected efforts made by parenting caregiver(s) to help their children get along with the reality of skin color bias rather than protect them from its psychological impact. This chapter continues with a summary of participant demographic data and then proceeds with an in-depth presentation of this study's findings.

Makeup of Participants

In this study, 93 participants addressed skin color bias in either the early exposure to skin color bias essay question or in the protective socialization essay questions. Demographically speaking, 97% of these participants were fairly evenly distributed between the ages of 25 and 69 with 83% of participants ranging in skin color from Dark Brown to Light Brown. In addition, most participants (a) were female (72%), (b) spent most of the their time growing up (birth through age 18) in the South (65%), (c) grew up (birth through age 18) in a family that was predominantly working class (44%), and (d) had a master's degree as their highest level of education attained at the time of the survey (43%). Summary demographic data for the self-perceived skin colors of these participants are presented in Table 6 and summary demographic data for all of the aforementioned participant descriptors are presented in Appendix G. (Please note that percentages provided in the remainder of chapter have been calculated using an *n* of 93 participants.)

Table 6

Self-Perceived Skin Colors of Participants

Self-Perceived Skin Colors	*n*	%
Very Dark Brown	3	3%
Dark Brown	26	28%
Medium Brown	30	32%
Light Brown	21	23%
Very Light Brown	13	14%
Totals	93	100%

Early and Noteworthy Exposure to Skin Color Bias

All study participants were asked to write a short essay as the main focal point for this study. Participants were asked to describe the earliest and most noteworthy experiences in which they were exposed to skin color bias from *within* the African American community. Participant responses to this question contained five major findings related to skin color bias.

The time frame, source, and nature of participants' earliest and most noteworthy exposures to skin color bias comprise the first major finding. Elementary school was the most frequently described time frame for early and noteworthy exposure to skin color bias from within the African American community. In addition, participants' peers were the most frequently described source. Moreover, the most commonly mentioned type of skin color bias involved teasing, ridicule, and mistreatment.

The second major finding was in regard to participant descriptions of the advantages and privileges shown to light-skinned African Americans from within the African American community. Participants observed or experienced favoritism and preferential treatment being shown to light-skinned African Americans because of their skin color. In addition, participants experienced or observed light skin being used as the standard for attractiveness among African Americans. Participants also noted the practice of equating light skin with beauty as well as the consideration of dark skin as a detractor from feminine beauty. Furthermore, these beliefs and practices related to attractiveness and beauty had a direct impact on dating experiences. Additionally, skin color was used to guide a person's associations in relationships other than dating.

The third major finding was that many of the aforementioned biased behaviors were described as being replicated within African American families, both nuclear and extended. The fourth major finding was that, when participants described their own thoughts about skin color, or their own skin color bias, the overall trend was that lighter skin was preferred or considered advantaged. And, if skin color bias was described as exhibited by the participant, self-blame was included in their response. The fifth major finding was that some participants stated they had not experienced skin color bias or were not able to recall instances where they had been exposed to it.

Evidence of all of the aforementioned findings is presented in greater detail below with "examples of [each concept provided] in the words of the research participants" (Anastas, 1999, p. 427). While certain quotes from participants' responses have been edited for the sake of brevity and brackets put into use by participants have been changed to parentheses, all participant quotes are otherwise reproduced in this document exactly as the participants typed them in their original responses. This includes the participants' original spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word choices.

Also, this study has two notable findings outside of those related to skin color bias. First, participants regularly mentioned hair texture bias as an issue, if not *the* issue, that they encountered. Second, a significant number of participants responded with answers that did not address skin color bias at all. The majority of these responses addressed racist treatment from whites. These findings are also discussed below.

Time Frame, Source, and Nature of Exposure to Skin Color Bias

Time Frame and Sources of Skin Color Bias

Participant descriptions of skin color bias events that they observed or experienced began as early as birth, although many of these experiences took place during their elementary school years. When participants mentioned sources of skin color bias, their peers were the most frequently described source from outside the participants' families. Other sources from outside the participants' families included teachers, neighbors, church members, the community, and the media. Within participants' families, extended family members, such as grandmothers, cousins, aunts, and great aunts, were mentioned most frequently although nuclear family members were also mentioned with notable frequency as sources of skin color bias.

Teasing, Ridicule, and Mistreatment

Many participants identified teasing, ridicule, and name calling as some of the early and noteworthy instances of skin color bias they observed or experienced. Most of the teasing was directed at those who were lighter or darker in skin color than their peers. One participant, a light brown female (25-29), described an environment growing up that was rife with teasing for children on both ends of the skin color spectrum.

> I have experienced being singled out as "light-skinned" and therefore thought that I was better than everyone else in grade school. I've witnessed other kids in grade school be teased for being too dark and they were called mean names. No one was immune to this sort of teasing - either the "darker-skinned" kids would tease the "lighter-skinned" kids for being "white" or "too good" or say things like "she thinks she's cute" (this would be an example of girls teasing girls). Or the "lighter-skinned" or "medium-brown skinned" kids would tease others for being "black as (some explicative)".

Another participant, a light brown female (50-59), described ongoing teasing of darker-skinned African Americans in spite of the Black Power movement.

> Around 1967, we were "black and proud" per James Brown. All my life, in spite of the saying "I'm black and I'm proud" we still teased the really dark skinned in the community and had all kinds of jokes about how black a person was. What a confusing era.

Some participants specified some of the names that were used to tease those who were lighter or darker in skin color.

> I can recall being called "light bright" in elementary school …. Growing up in the early sixties, I became acutely aware that dark skin people were usually referred to as "tar baby", "blackie", or "gorilla."

> I am a brown skinned women and I was refered to as "blackie,sambo and midnight just to name a few.

Also mentioned frequently, from the youngest to the oldest age ranges, were instances of mistreatment based on skin color. The mistreatment of darker-skinned African Americans was mentioned with twice the frequency as that of lighter-skinned African Americans and included, in addition to teasing, being looked down upon, being treated more harshly, and being shunned or ostracized. The mistreatment described was very similar between participants in the older and younger age ranges.

> In ES & HS the lighter skin colored kids were treated better then the darker color skinned kids. The darker colored kids were more frequently called derogatory names, picked on and left out, or were the last to be chosen, for team sports or events.

> The earlist and most noteworth experience was when I began to attend a racial mixed public middle school, where I was ostracized b/c of my dark skin as oppose to my being African American. These experinces where the general middle school stuff, I was ugly, I looked like a gorilla.

> I was around 10 years old when I was first exposed to skin color bias. If your skin color was darker than most, you were the last chosen in whatever the event was at that time.

Interestingly, some of the mistreatment of darker-skinned African Americans came from other African Americans who were darker-skinned.

> In elementary school, my sister who has a dark brown hue was teased by a classmate who himself was noticeably darker that she. … The word blackie was spewed … by her male classmate.

> I was in kindergarten and another african american student made a huge deal about me using the brown crayon to draw a picture of myself. She told me that because I was darker than her that I was actually "black" and that she was "brown." We attended a school were there were not a lot of minorities. Up until that time, I had considered her to be somewhat of an ally or a special friend. Her statement hurt me deeply then, though at the time I did not understand why.

Study participants, from the youngest to the second oldest age category, also described mistreatment of lighter-skinned African Americans in their responses. In addition to teasing, these responses often described lighter-skinned African Americans being accused of being or acting white and included themes of resentment and resultant exclusion by darker-skinned colleagues.

> It started around fourth grade when my classmates, also African-American, would refer to me as yellow and accuse me of thinking I was white.

> … On the other side of my family, I have always been teased because I was much lighter than my cousins. My cousins would ask my mom when I was little, "Why is your baby white when you are black?" They still call me the white sheep of the family.

> As early as I can remember skin bias was used against me from people outside my immediate and extended families. I am of light complextion, and people of darker skin tones were always judgmental of me. I was called "red", "light skinned nigger", and oreo when I was in high school. Any achievements that I earned within the predominantly white community was blamed on my coloring and not my abilities.

> As child around the age of 9 or 10, I remember being exposed and becoming aware of skin color bias within the African American community. Being of a fair complexion, I was called dirty reds, red bone and other deragatory names. … There were some advantages as I grew up , one for instance was some sisters liked the light skin and quote good hair. On the other hand soem darker skinned brothers gave me the blues because I did not fit certain stereotypes and therefore I was not able to participate in soem activities and was not invited to some functions.
>
> Ever since I can remember I've been teased by people and a few famil member because I am a very light skinned person. They call me names like 1/2 white and mixed breed. My african american family/friends look at me like i should be white and my white friends/family look at me like I should be black.

In addition to being accused of being or acting white, one respondent described thinking of herself as better than others because of her skin color and several light-skinned respondents described experiences of being accused by others of being "stuck up" or "snobbish."

> "I have experienced being singled out as "light-skinned" and therefore thought that I was better than everyone else in grade school.
>
> Well my most noteworthy experience would probably be my childhood days in general. I was always made fun of because I was very light skinned. Just the opposite of what people expect. In my opinion people were just acting off of old stereotypes. For instance, the one thing I always heard was that I thought I was "all that" or "stuck up" and acted "white."
>
> I grew up with other African Americans, who tended to be dark-skinned in color and was taunted by them because I have a light-complexion and had long hair. My parents were middle class African Americans who had done well for themselves, i.e. a big house, expensive cars, education, etc. and there were efforts to insinuate that we were snobbish and thought we were better than others.

Finally, while not always considered teasing or mistreatment, participants also mentioned with frequency African Americans being referred to by their skin color (e.g., black, dark, red, yellow).

> I remember hearing bias comments from my grandmother as a child. I think I was about 8 or 9 years of age. She referred to the person by skin color. I don't remember her saying anything negative except it struck me as odd to hear someone referred to as red or dark.
>
> My earliest recollection of this is when I was young and playing with my cousins (who were all fair skinned). They used to call me "black" this or "black" that. Dark skin color was always denoted as a negative, and I used to take offense to that as a child..... later, I came back with an equally effective "light" joke.
>
> I remember as early as my elementary years of school how kids would refer to your skin color in anger, either "yo black self" or "yo yellow self" .

Advantages and Privileges Shown to Light-Skinned African Americans

Favoritism and Preferential Treatment

Several respondents, lighter- and darker-skinned, older and younger, also described events where lighter-skinned African Americans were shown favoritism or given preferential treatment. Some observed or experienced this behavior at school or at work and described situations ranging from lighter-skinned African Americans being able to get away with misbehavior, to being assumed better or smarter by authority figures, to being selected first for anything from school leadership activities to work opportunities.

Participants also described instances of favoritism or preferential treatment that were shown to lighter-skinned family members from *within* the family. These findings are presented in the Skin Color Bias within Families section.

> My earliest memories of skin color bias occurred when I began my public school education. I am a dark skinned person and so I immediately saw the favoitism given to the lighter skinned students. They were always given preferntial treatment and were allowed to "get away" with many behavioral infractions without any form of punishment , ridicule or discipline. This disparity of treatment came from the "educated" teachers and principal of the school.
>
> I remember fair-skinned Black students being treated differently (better) as early as grade school. Both Black and White instructors assumed that lighter Blacks came from a better upbringing and, therefore, had more potential as students. However, this assumption only extended between Black students; even fair-

> skinned Black students were still presumed to be "beneath" White students of ANY socioeconomic class.
>
> Skin color bias has been experienced during my academic studies at [two historically black colleges/universities]. The light colored Afro-American students seem to have been given opportunities and lower standards. Upon entering the work force it appeared lighter complexion employees always seem to achieve higher paying positions or first preference to managerial positions. I entered the workforce as a professional employee in [the early- to mid-1980s] and this practice still exist today.

Attractiveness and Dating

Another consistent theme throughout participant responses, both lighter and darker, younger and older, was the idea that lighter skin color was considered to be the standard for attractiveness within the African American community. Related to this was the oft-mentioned idea that lighter-skinned African Americans were automatically considered beautiful or attractive. One participant, a light brown female (25-29), stated

> Growing up, probably around the age of 12, it was always a "fact" that the light-skinned guys and girls were the cutest or better looking people.

This assumption of light-skinned attractiveness, as well as light skin as the standard for attractiveness, was typically described as evidencing itself in the context of dating. Most participant comments centered on the assumed attractiveness and desirability of light-skinned women, although the assumed attractiveness and desirability of light-skinned men was also mentioned. One participant, a medium brown male, stated…

> the first thing that comes to mind is a situation when a light skinned girl moved into the community and all of the boys were trying their best to get her attention. More attention was paid to her than many of the other young ladies.

Lighter-skinned participants, male and female, noted their observation of this phenomenon.

> As a young college student in Washington, DC. It was very prevalent that the lighter skinned females got most of the attention and preference from the opposite sex.
>
> There were always stories about who could date whom, based on skin color. Dark skinned boys wanted light skinned girls, one dark skinned friend of mine was interested only in light skinned boys.
>
> In high school, I had a black friend who raved about how attractive the girl he took to the prom was. He got into a playful dispute with another black classmate about whose prom date was prettier. they decided that i would be the judge. Boy A whips out a picture of him and a light-skinned girl and Boy B produces his picture with a brown-skinned girl in it. The brown-skinned girl was much prettier than the light skinned girl, but Boy A kept crowing about how "fine" his light-skinned date was. I can't remember how everything resolved itself…., but I definitely felt like Boy A was somehow color-struck by his light-skinned date and there was no objective reason other than skin color bias for him to be putting down the brown-skinned girl in favor of his unattractive light-skinned date.

Darker-skinned women and men, younger and older, also described the impact of this phenomenon on their dating experiences.

> I recall when I wanted to talk to a particular guy and he expressed that he was only interested in girls with long hair and light skin. I am a brown-skinned girl and he shunned me because of my complexion. This was in middle school.
>
> In school....guys would always try to get with the light skinned girls....they would never give any darker girls any play
>
> Later in life as I began to notice boys, I found that they looked upon the fair skinned,girls with the "good" hair as being pretty; and the darker girls as the ones they were willing to sexually abuse. (For a dark skinned female of a low socio-economic standing, this was often the only attention we were given
>
> a friend of mine … had an experience, where a light skinned girl told him that she doesn't date dark skinned men.

In addition, two dark brown male participants, in their mid-40s and mid-20s respectively, specifically commented on the light-skinned African American female being considered a status symbol. Other participants also alluded to this phenomenon or suggested it in their comments.

> I remember feeling color bias when I was 14 or 15. Previously, I had gone to a mostly white church, but I started going to a Black church and I remember noticed the use of discrimantory language. She is pretty because she got good hair and is light skin. I think it is very pronounced in the Black church. The pastors were dark and had light skinned wifes who were treasured because of there "beauty". You had dark skinned [name deleted] who was seened as not as beautiful.
>
> I myself seemed to be more interested in the lighter skinned women or girls …. Not because they were necessarily prettier than the dark skinned girls, but because they would be more likely to be approved of by my peers.....

However, dark skin was never described as enhancing a woman's beauty. Instead it was mentioned as a detractor from beauty or as something that a woman was pretty in spite of. One participant, a light brown male, described an experience with his mother…

> I remember looking at photos with my mother and I remember commenting that one of the women in the pictures was very pretty. And my mom replied that yes, she was dark-skinned, but pretty. It bothered me that my mom said "dark-skinned, but pretty." I couldn't tell if she meant that dark skin and beauty doesn't usually go hand-in-hand or that "dark-skinned and pretty" was never as attractive as "light skinned and pretty." Either way, her words saddened me, because my mom had always seemed free of bias, but I think she may have absorbed some of the negative attitudes that she herself experienced, as she is not light-skinned herself. I was probably 11 or 12 yrs old at the time.

Female participants, from very light brown to dark brown, described this phenomenon as well.

> As a child I would often hear adults determine a child's beauty (specifically girls) by the color of their skin. If a darker skinned child was deemed attractive they would say things like "she is real dark but cute" as thought that was an exception.
>
> Strangley, my dark skin mae me more masculine in my peers eyes.
>
> When I went to college, I was told I was really pretty to be a dark skinned girl.

Skin Color Guiding Associations

In addition to dating experiences, participants described other instances where skin color was used to determine with whom one would associate socially. Most

descriptions involved individuals making personal choices about friendships, but one participant described skin color being used as a determinant for entry into an elite high school.

> My mother attended [name of high school] and at that time, [name of high school] was a school for the college-bound, upper class blacks. My mom says that she had to pass a "paper bag test" meaning no one who was darker than a paper bag could attend.
>
> …while in church [it] seemed that the light skin girls use to group together and keep those who were not quite their complection at a distance.
>
> I never really noticed a bias … until I got older had friends that had problems with people because they were too black.

While most responses described instances where lighter-skinned African Americans sought to maintain social stratification from those who were darker-skinned, one medium brown respondent spoke of lighter-skinned African Americans preferring darker-skinned people.

> …. By the age of five, I was aware that … Bwing brown skinned was considered as being "doo-key colored" with a negative connotation. Dark skinned (black in colore) did not care for Browns, and Light skinned, preferred darker skinned people--on average.

Some participants also described family members influencing, or seeking to influence, other family members' personal associations based on skin color. The illustrative responses given below are from participants ranging from 28 to 71 years old.

> I first recognized the bias in my neighborhood when I was about 9 years old. The two mulatto families on the street where we lived did not participate in the neighborhood activities or allow their children to play with the rest of us.
>
> Around 8th grade, I recall eating oreos at the kitchen table and my great-aunt (who was visiting) stated very matter-of-factly "I hope you don't bring home a (husband) as black as those cookies you're eating." I remember being vaguely confused and uncomfortable...that was the first time any overt color issue was brought up around me.

> I … felt … pressure from my in-laws when I … married my wife …, stating that I was too black for her. Today I'm called "red" but I'm really light brown skinned….
>
> … my ex-mother-in-law… thought I was too dark for her son.
>
> I am originally from South Louisiana where color bias is still very prevalent. I can remember my family making negative comments about my very light skinned boyfriend. They felt that he was't black enough to be a part of our family. They felt as if I were trying to "be white" by dating someone very light skinned.

Skin Color Bias within Families

Participants also described skin color difference as affecting a wide range of intrafamilial relationships. These included the sibling relationship, the parent-child relationship, and extended family relationships. In general, favoritism was shown to lighter-skinned family members and dislike or mistreatment shown to those who were darker-skinned. However, teasing for being lighter in skin color than most family members was also described.

Interestingly, all of the findings that were a part of experiences outside the family were also described as taking place within the family: teasing, ridicule, mistreatment, favoritism, preferential treatment, assumed attractiveness for those who were lighter-skinned, and a trend toward family preferences for dating and marrying lighter-skinned partners.

> I would have to say that I noticed it at an early estimated age of five years. My first exposure to it was within my maternal extended family. My aunt, who has the lightest complexion of all her siblings carried herself as if she was loved more by my grandparents. She favored my cousins that were light skinned over my sister and I, who where the two dark skinned children with kinky hair. She would always talk about hair texture and length. Although, she was the only one in my family that that placed importance on skin color, her actions affected me in a negative way becasue I became more aware of my looks and what I did not have, as opposed to what I did have.

> I was first exposed to this kind of bias in my immediate family. My mother is very dark and my father is very fair. My father's family did not like us because we were dark like my mothers people. This played out in various ugly ways.
>
> When I was younger my grandmother (who is light skinned) took to the lighter grandkids, and sort of shunned the darker skinned grandkids.
>
> My mother's side of the family consists primarily of brown to darker skinned African Americans. I had a couple of cousins who on a regular basis called me "white girl" because of my lighter skin complexion.

Skin color difference between siblings was described as impacting the parent-child relationship and the sibling relationship. The scenarios described often involved favoritism or mistreatment.

> It was impressionable to hear my grandmother describe beautiful women, or women she deemed to be beautiful, as being "fair with long-hair". My grandmother herself was quite beautiful and would fall into that category. My grandmothers children might even say that she treated her children better or worse according to their skin tone.
>
> I felt that my parent favored my sister due to lighter skin color
>
> [I experienced skin color bias] Going to school as a kid and between my brother and I. He was born lighter than I was and of course was the favorite.
>
> My experience within the Black community, in particular with my family, deemed pretty odd. My brother would always separate my photo in the family album, from the other siblings, because I was darker than the other children. Of course I was young and that did bother me in some respect. As I became older and more confident, I embraced my color. I think I was more troubled that someone in my family, would use my skin color over any race that I came in contact with.

It is notable that, in 19 responses, participants specifically referenced skin color difference within their family, nuclear or extended, as directly related to the instance of skin color bias they described.

Given all of the above, it may well have been expected that some respondents would describe situations where there was familial concern over a newborn’s skin color.

> Both of my parents are southerners. My mother from a more affluent [southern state] family who happened to be lighter skinned. My father from the poor, hard-working, [description and name of different southern state]. I'm the oldest and was three when my first sibling came along. The conversation amongst relatives/friends was "is she fair, medium, etc..." I remember hearing my mother say you can tell what complexion a baby will be by looking at its ears. If it is born light but has dark ears, its complexion will darken also.
>
> My first experience was at birth, so of course it was described to me and this is what I remember. My grandmother (father's side) was half white, so just was naturally lighter. My mother is very brown. Before my paternal grandmother would claim me, she came to the hospital to check on my coloring.
>
> Within in my family when I had my first child. An aunt made a comment, I thought your daughter would be lighter. I'm brown and most of my family members are lighter than myself. I never felt any negativity from family members directed towards me and was a little surprised that the comment was made.

Participants' Personal Thoughts about Skin Color

Lighter Skin Color Preferred and Considered Advantaged

A few participant responses also addressed experiences where participants expressed their own personal thoughts about skin color. Some talked about skin color preferences of their era, others noted advantages or feelings of relief related to being a particular skin color. The overall trend was that lighter skin was preferred and considered advantaged.

> I was an 80's baby so I grew up when everyone wanted to be light skinned.
>
> I was around 10 years old when I was first exposed to skin color bias. … This was in the 1950's - then color was a big deal - the lighter the better.
>
> When I went to a church picnic as a child, I noticed that the real dark kids were picked last to be on a team. I have to admit that I was glad that I was not so dark.
>
> I had a couple of cousins who on a regular basis called me "white girl" because of my lighter skin complexion. It was something that bothered me and I did not think or understand why skin color within one race/ethnic group was such a big deal.

> … I was always made fun of because I was very light skinned. … I never truly understood it yet as I got older I realized that though I was teased during childhood, the rest of my life would be significantly easier. And it has. I realize that it is not particularly a good thing, but at the same time I accept that thats how the world is.

One participant, a very light brown female (30-39), stated

> Today, I wish that I was slightly darker, but honestly would not want to have to endure the treatment that dark skinned women have to endure.

Another participant described a scenario where her friend's mother's skin color bias was structuring her friend's summer days.

> I can remember at age 13 during the summer months, one of the neighborhood girls that I played with on a daily basis could not come out to play during the summer months until late in evening. Her reason was her mother did not want her to get "dark." My friend was very comfortable in sharing this with me. In fact she was very light skinned, however, the rest of her siblings were brown skinned to very dark skinned. Her mother was very dark skinned, I never saw her father. This experience was a little strange to me because my family ranges in color from very very light to dark skinned, and everybody played outside during the summer.

Participant Feelings about Personal Expression of Bias

Most respondents did not comment on their own behaviors that demonstrated skin color bias but two did. In both cases, the preferencing of lighter skin was discussed and each participant expressed feelings of self-blame as a result. One participant, a dark brown male, stated

> I was an 80's baby so I grew up when everyone wanted to be light skinned. At school, kids (and this includes myself) would tease the darker children.....you know, the "You so black" jokes. Also, I myself seemed to be more interested in the lighter skinned women or girls in this case. Not because they were necessarily prettier than the dark skinned girls, but because they would be more likely to be approved of by my peers.....I know, that's pretty shallow.

Another participant, a light brown female, stated

> I believe this may have been around the age of 12 or 13 when I exhibited my own personal bias. During the course of a conversation involving physical features and beauty, I said to a playmate of mine that, "I had always been lighter than her." I

> feel the very statement reprsents my own biasness within the confines of my own cultural community as an African-American.

Skin Color Bias Not Experienced or Not Recalled

A few respondents mentioned that they did not recall or had no personal experience with skin color bias. From the way some of their answers were worded, it is unclear whether none of them had ever been exposed to it but, due to this study's research design, it was not possible to follow up to obtain clarification.

Hair Texture Bias

In addition to all of the responses about skin color bias, many responses also commented on the bias around hair texture. In each case, hair that was naturally wavy or straight (also known as "good" hair) was valued over "kinky," "coarse," or "nappy" hair, also known as "bad" hair. Some participants even described hair texture bias as their salient issue rather than skin color bias. Of the 15 participants who mentioned hair texture bias, 10 were female.

> I remember being mistreated as a young child by family members because my hair was not straight like my cousins. Even though I have light skin, I was not accepted by my grandmother.

> Growing up in a small African American town, I don't remember much of a skin bias, as opposed to hair texture. My hair was kinkier than most of my relatives but I was lighter then them. I always had a complex about being pale and never really felt like I fit in because my hair was like no one else's that I knew

> In elementary school, I was teased because I was dark skinned and had "nappy" short hair. Many of my friends were light skinned African Americans.

> If any [skin color bias occurred] at all it occurred during high school and had to do more with texture of hair rather than skin color.

> … my ex-mother-in-law … made … derogatory comments related to describing people as having "bad" (AKA, coarse, black) hair as opposed to "good" (AKA, silky, white) hair.

> I don't recall experiencing skin color bias. …The bias that I experienced was about hair texture …

Racism

Out of 124 participants, over 25 of them addressed the issue of racist treatment from whites instead of skin color bias from within the African American community. These responses covered a wide range of experiences, including being called a "nigger" by whites, being followed in a store by store employees for no apparent reason, being refused entrance to a drugstore, challenges presented by interracial dating, the disparate socioeconomic impact of racism, being taunted by white children, being pulled over by the police for no apparent reason, an experience where the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) came to the participant's neighborhood, and other incidents of aggression from whites.

Protective Socialization Related to Skin Color Bias

The second inquiry made of all study participants was whether their parenting caregiver(s) or anyone else had ever talked with them or done other things that the participants felt helped protect them from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community. If so, participants were asked to briefly describe how this had been done. Participant responses to this question contained four major findings related to whether and how participants felt they had been protectively socialized with regard to skin color bias.

First, 51% stated they had not had parenting caregiver(s) or anyone else talk with them or do anything else that they felt helped protect them from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community. Second, participants who felt protectively socialized frequently described the nature of many of these efforts as educational. These

educational efforts included influential others teaching participants (a) how to think about themselves with regard to their skin color, (b) about the existence of skin color bias and how to think about it, (c) about African American history and the importance of taking pride in their culture, and (d) how to think about other African Americans who demonstrated skin color bias.

Third, participants who felt protectively socialized described different environments, whether in or outside of the home, that they found to be protective. These environments included those shaped by specific parenting caregiver behaviors as well as those outside the home that participants experienced as accepting or empowering. In addition, a few participants found a lack of skin color bias as "an issue" in their home or neighborhood environments to be protective. Fourth, a small number of responses from those who stated they had been protectively socialized reflected efforts made by parenting caregiver(s) to help their children get along with the reality of skin color bias rather than protect them from its psychological impact. This chapter continues with an in-depth explanation of findings from this study's second question.

Extent of Protective Socialization

The first major finding for this study question relates to whether protective socialization regarding skin color bias within the African American community was taking place. Of the 93 participants who addressed skin color bias in their responses, 51% stated they had not had parenting caregiver(s) or anyone else talk with them or do anything else that they felt helped protect them from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community. Some participants responded even when checking "No." In their responses, these participants described their parenting caregiver(s) holding

biased beliefs about skin color or reinforcing those beliefs with the participants. Participant responses are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

Protective Socialization against Skin Color Bias

Source(s) of Protective Socialization	*n*	%
Parenting caregiver(s) and others	21	23%
Only parenting caregiver(s)	17	18%
Only persons other than parenting caregiver(s)	6	6%
No one	47	51%
Parenting caregiver(s) reinforced skin color bias while seeking to protect their children	2	2%
Totals	93	100%

Responses from the 49% of participants who did feel protectively socialized against skin color bias contained the three remaining major findings for this study question. This group of participants described a variety of efforts put forth on their behalf by their parenting caregiver(s), extended families, and other influential individuals outside their nuclear families. Influential individuals outside their nuclear families included (a) adults in their neighborhood or community, (b) teachers, (c) friends, and (d) their church family.

Educational Efforts

Purposeful and Positive Self-Talk

Participants most often described efforts put forth by parenting caregiver(s) and others to educate them about how to think about themselves. Within this category,

thinking of one's self as beautiful was mentioned most frequently. Other comments centered on believing in one's self and one's potential as well as understanding that the value of a person does not reside in their skin color but in who they are and what they do. One participant, a dark brown female, stated

> The wonderful thing about my mother is she taught me I was beautiful and often told me so. Her self love taught me to love myself and to disregard the negetavie remarks for what they were. Ignorant! [In addition,] My mother had six sisters and they all had a strong sense of self they always told me I was beautiful and there was nothing I could not do no matter what color I was. So they to taught me to love myself, color and all.

Another participant, a light brown female, stated

> The women in my family always stressed that we were all beautiful and worthy, not because of our hair texture or skin color, but because of how we behaved...I had "pretty is as pretty does" drummed into my head from a young age.

Addressing Skin Color Bias Directly

Some parenting caregiver(s) and others directly addressed the issue of skin color bias with the participants. Different approaches were described but, in each instance, parenting caregiver(s) and others sought to educate the participants about the existence of skin color bias.

> The discussion in my house started out with my parents discussing racism in general, more specifically, racism that I would typically feel from EuroAmericans and then incorporated a discussion of how racism can exist with African Americans as well, based up the hues of color and the ideologies that exist from slavery and that have played out in society.
>
> My mother and extended family made it a point to openly discuss skin color bias, and to remind me of the beauty of my skin
>
> They [my parenting caregivers] told me that beauty was skin deep...and tried to explain that some people thought complexion was important, but it wasn't.

Cultural Pride and Awareness of History

Parenting caregiver(s) and others also sought to protectively socialize participants by teaching them to have pride in their culture and an awareness of their history. This passing on of history took place by sharing historical facts as well as personal stories.

> My parents … instilled self and cultural pride in all of us.
>
> My mother was and is very pro black always talked in the positvie about African American people so I in turned also saw positive in that community
>
> My parents educated me on black history. My dad always made sure that I knew where I came from. Sometimes the only thing one needs for protection is to be informed.
>
> My parents always taught me to be proud to be Black despite the fact that most of my relatives could have passed for another race.
>
> My parents and grandparents discussed the importance of not having self-hatred and appreciating my culture.
>
> … my parents and grandparents would often tell me stories of segregation and the differences between their childhood and mind.
>
> I just remember the Black is beautiful movement in the sixties, and the Afros. We were inspired by music, the Black Panthers, etc. I think the whole movement instilled pride in Black people.

Ways to Address Skin Color Bias

Parenting caregiver(s) and others also sought to give participants ways to think about those who demonstrated skin color bias and ways to address it. The main focus of this guidance centered on recommending that participants ignore skin color bias and take a dismissive attitude toward those who engaged in it.

> My Grandfather stated once that we allcame from one person, and all bleed red unless something was realy wrong with us and that I should not place too much stock in the negatives put out by my people who can not appreciate others because of the color of their skin.

> My parents would often point out that skin color did not matter. I learned from my parents that this discrimination was silly. [In addition,] I had friends and other family members who felt that the discrimination was senseless and the majority felt it ridiculous. We didn't encourage it on my mother's side of the family. It was a bit more prevalent on my father's side of the family.

One participant, a light brown male, stated

> It was my mother's belief that people or people no matter the tone of their complextion. It was through her that I learned that people who constantly trashed you because of the color your skin were either ignorant or jealous.

Another participant, a dark brown female, stated that her parenting caregiver(s) told her

> You are a beautiful and smart person regardless of you skin color. Hold your head high and ignore negative comments.

Protective Environments

Active Shaping of the Participant's Environment

Participants also experienced certain behaviors exhibited by their parenting caregiver(s) or others as protective socialization. Behaviors described included parenting caregiver(s) creating a home free of favoritism based on skin color as well as parenting caregiver(s), or others, taking corrective action when needed.

No favoritism between siblings.

> My parents always told me I was beautiful. They are both darker skinned. My sister is the fairest in the family. They never treated us different

> My parent made no distiction between me and my darker complexed siblings and never allowed anyone else to separate us based on color.

Correction.

> I always felt as if my Mother was quick to note when someone said something b/c of someone's skin color. She didn't do it frequently but just enough to make me think about why I responded the way I did to certain things.

> I was punished for calling a classmate "shine". I really didn't think it was that bad, but I got in trouble for it and my mom explained that it was a hurtful comment.

Correction (albeit reinforcing the social construction of race).

> Ninth grade Civic teacher: helping a student deal with being called "black" by a fair skin student. She explained that a we were all Black regardless of tone of skin. My first experience of being told that being dark skin was not a bad thing.

Exposure to Protective Environments

Some participants stated that their environments played in important role in protecting them from the impact of skin color bias. The environments described ranged from the community to school to church and all provided positive and protective environments for the participants.

> My parents would never take me around persons or places where I would be subjected to prejudice. [In addition,] I grew up in a true community in the sense that most of the elders were positive role models and they modeled what it was like to be a positive Black people. They were teachers, principals, superintendents, president of the school boards, they belonged to civic organizations/greeks that gave back to their communities. Watching them gave us a feeling that we could be an effective self-contained community and gave us the role models to demonstrate that we could be what we wanted to be and be successful.

> I had many teachers, community member and church family to protect me from the impact of skin color bias withing the African American community

> Within the church I felt protected from skin/color bias. Our congregation was a rainbow of colors and I never remember feeling 'less' or 'more' important than others because of my complexion. We all belonged to the church family and I do not remember any preferences or bias. This is more than I can say for my real family.

> My church was a big part of my growing up and we had many skin colors and a few inter-race marriages. Seeing different skin colors in a loving environment help me to be the person I am today.

Skin Color Bias a Non-Issue

Additionally, a few participants felt that the lack of skin color bias as an issue in either their home or neighborhood environments was protective.

> … my mother shared her experiences with me but I don't think it was to "protect" me so much as to share her experiences. My father is darker-skinned, one of my brothers is light and the other dark. I am in the middle and skin color was never an "issue" in our family.
>
> Most people i lived aroound expressed a liking to my skin and never expressed dislike. i grew uop in the north were I don't believe people focused on skin color.
>
> I was always told how pretty that I am. My father was extremely vocal in stating that a person's complexion had nothing to do with the person. [In addition,] I was often told that I was pretty by caucasions both male and female. My brown complexion was never factored into the comment.

Reinforcement of Skin Color Bias through Acceptance and Adaptation

A small number of the responses from participants who answered "Yes," they had been protectively socialized, seemed to reflect efforts the parenting caregiver(s) made to help their children get along with skin color bias rather than directly protect them from its psychological impact.

One participant, a medium brown female, described her very light brown skinned mother's advice as follows:

> My mother told me to be careful of what colors to wear. My mother always told me to try to keep my hair looking nice.

Another participant, a dark brown male, was told by his dark brown grandmother, also his primary parenting caregiver,

> One should always be clean. It seemed that the darker you were, the dirier you are.

Also, three participants who answered "No" to the protective socialization questions provided comments in the space given for those who answered "Yes." One participant felt that the skin color difference between each of her parents and also herself "did most of the job in making me rather indifferent to the issue." However, the other two

participants described scenarios where skin color bias was reinforced by their parenting caregiver(s). One participant, a dark brown male (25-29), stated

> My parenting caregiver unconsciously contributed since she went through the same thing as a child.

Another participant, a very light brown female, stated

> Unfortunately, my own father liked the idea that he was a light skinned negro. However, I believed that everyone is God's child and equal in His sight.

Additional Comments from Participants

Out of the 124 participants who answered at least one essay question, an astonishing number chose to respond to the final feedback question. This question asked participants whether there was anything else they wanted to share related to (a) skin color bias within the African American community, (b) their own personal experiences with skin color bias, or (c) the survey. While these responses were not intended to formally address this study's research question, a summary of themes found in the participants' feedback is presented here due to the wealth of information the participants provided and in order to give an indication of the thematic range of their comments.

The first theme in the feedback responses from participants was that skin color bias and skin color advantage are still quite evident today with some participants being of the opinion that skin color bias may have changed in nature (e.g., changing from overt to covert skin color bias). The second theme was that skin color still plays a role in dating and marriage with lighter skin remaining the strong preference for many within the African American community and its families. Responses for the second theme also included specific comments about African American males preferring light-skinned women over dark-skinned. The third theme centered on the influence of society and the

media in perpetuating skin color bias especially by consistently associating beauty with light skin. The fourth theme addressed the historical origins of skin color bias and the influence of oppression and slavery.

Participants' discussion of a need for change and education related to skin color bias comprised the fifth theme. And the sixth theme was that many participants chose to share personal stories and comments related to skin color bias. These stories and comments consisted of multiple sub-themes including skin color difference within families; personal skin color preference; personal skin color bias; managing skin color (e.g., staying out of the sun); hair texture bias; body type; cultural pride; and the perspective of white colleagues. The seventh theme was that some participants stated they had had no personal experience with skin color bias. And, finally, the eighth theme addressed the importance of research on skin color bias, whether regarding this study or others. Generally speaking, the personal stories and comments that this study's participants provided in response to the feedback question reflected pain, frustration, and an overall desire for change.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

While skin color bias as a derivative of white supremacy is just one false idea spawned from another, its impact has been far reaching, divisive, and considerably damaging to the African American community. This study was undertaken with the hope of exposing the lies on which this destructive ideology feeds; providing empowerment, education, and an impetus for positive change within the African American community; and also providing mental health clinicians with tools to support that change.

The specific and stated goal of this study was to ascertain the kinds of messages that African Americans are being exposed to that introduce them to the existence and reality of skin color bias within the African American community. This differs from the majority of the literature which tends to focus on the existence of skin color bias and sometimes its results (e.g., emotional pain, privileges, or advantages due to skin color). Thus, this study supports the existing literature in that it provides empirical support for that which is typically only anecdotally discussed.

This study also adds to the existing literature in that it makes a beginning attempt to understand the perpetuation of skin color bias within the African American community by looking at its historical origins as well as what the African American community is doing to perpetuate it. This study then goes further by analyzing participant data and the literature in order to provide a starting place for African Americans and mental health clinicians interested in making positive change with regard to this issue.

Because a thorough review of this study's findings was provided in the Findings Chapter, this chapter, after a brief consideration of the study's major findings with regard to the literature, will dwell much more extensively on the implications of the findings and resulting recommendations for both African Americans and mental health clinicians -- regardless of the clinician's racial classification within the United States. It will also summarize key recommendations for further study, address the generalizability of the data, note the influence of bias on the study, and close with a brief statement of conclusions.

Participants were presented with two research questions in this study. The first research question asked participants to describe the earliest and most noteworthy experiences in which they were exposed to skin color bias from within the African American community. This question produced findings that were markedly consistent with preexisting literature and that added to that body of knowledge. The second research question asked participants whether and how they felt they had been protectively socialized against the impact of skin color bias from within the African American community. This question produced findings that also added to the preexisting literature.

Consistency of Study Findings with the Literature

Early and Noteworthy Exposure to Skin Color Bias

Time Frame, Source, and Nature of Exposure to Skin Color Bias

The details of the first major finding from this study's first research question revealed that elementary school was the most frequently described time frame for early and noteworthy exposure to skin color bias from within the African American community. Moreover, participants' peers were the most frequently described source. In

addition, the most commonly mentioned type of skin color bias involved teasing, ridicule, and mistreatment.

Much of the details related to this finding are highly consistent with, or at least can be easily inferred from, the literature (e.g., Averhart & Bigler, 1997; Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Haugabrook, 1993; Parrish, 1946; Porter, 1991), although Parrish's (1946) and Haugabrook's (1993) studies provide the most empirical similarity. In addition, Boyd-Franklin's (2003) anecdotal comments are highly consistent with many of the details of this finding. However, the specific details of this finding are not explicitly repetitive of previous empirical studies.

Key details from this major finding include teasing and ridicule particularly shown to those who were lighter or darker in skin color than their peers (cf. Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Haugabrook, 1993); mistreatment shown toward those who were lighter or darker in skin color than their peers (cf. Boyd-Franklin, 2003); the mistreatment of lighter-skinned African Americans often centering around being accused of being or acting white and including themes of resentment and resultant exclusion by darker-skinned colleagues (cf. Parrish, 1946; Spickard, 1989); the mistreatment of darker-skinned African Americans being mentioned more frequently than mistreatment of lighter-skinned African Americans and including, in addition to teasing, being looked down upon, being treated more harshly, and being shunned or ostracized (cf. Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Keith & Herring, 1991).

It is interesting to note that the mistreatment of light- and dark-skinned African Americans seems to go along the lines of stereotypes based on Maddox and Gray's (2002) study. Their study found that whites and African Americans tend to apply positive

stereotypes to lighter-skinned African Americans and negative stereotypes to those who are darker-skinned. This, in conjunction with the findings of this study, suggests that treatment, whether favorable or not, seems to be an outflow of the stereotypes.

Advantages and Privileges for Light-Skinned African Americans

In the next major finding related to the first research question for this study, participants described advantages and privileges shown to light-skinned African Americans from within the African American community. The details of this finding were highly consistent with the literature. Participants described privileges that included being favored or shown preferential treatment at school and at work (cf. Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Parrish, 1946; Watson, 1999); the automatic presumption of beauty or attractiveness, shown especially toward light-skinned women (with the inverse being true for dark-skinned women) (cf. Hill, 2002; see also Neal and Wilson's (1989) review of the literature on this subject); and being selected or preferred more often to participate in dating (cf. Russell et al., p. 1992; Udry, 1971) or other types of social relationships.

Skin Color Bias within Families

The third major finding related to the first research question in this study was that many of the biased behaviors mentioned as coming from sources outside the family were also described as being replicated within African American families, both nuclear and extended, whenever skin color differences existed within those families. In general, participants described favoritism being shown toward lighter-skinned family members and dislike or mistreatment shown toward those who were darker-skinned. However, teasing for being lighter in skin color than most family members was also described.

The biased behaviors that were described by participants as coming from both without and within the family were highly consistent with the literature and included teasing, ridicule, mistreatment, favoritism, preferential treatment, assumed attractiveness for those who were lighter-skinned, and preferences for dating and marrying lighter-skinned partners (cf. Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Greene, 1990a, 1990b; Thompson, C. L., 1995; Tummala-Narra, 2007; Watson, 1999). Unique to family-demonstrated bias was familial concern over a newborn's skin color (cf. Thompson, C. L., 1995; Watson, 1999). A wide range of familial relationships was described as being affected by skin color bias within the family including the sibling relationship, the parent-child relationship, and extended family relationships (cf. Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Watson, 1999).

Personal Thoughts about Skin Color

Fourth, in participant reports of their own thoughts about skin color or their own skin color bias, the overall trend was that lighter skin was preferred or considered advantaged. This trend is consistent with the literature (cf. Jones, T., 2000; Parrish, 1946; Porter, 1991). This finding also adds to the literature in that these descriptions included feelings of relief related to being a particular color. Further, if participants described personally exhibiting skin color bias, self-blame was included in their response.

Hair Texture Bias

Interestingly, many participants commented on the bias around hair texture. In each case, hair that was naturally wavy or straight (also known as "good" hair) was valued over "kinky," "coarse," or "nappy" hair, also known as "bad" hair. Some participants even described hair texture bias as their salient issue rather than skin color bias. The prominence of hair texture bias as an issue in the African American community

is highly consistent with the literature (e.g., Boyd-Franklin, 1991; Byrd & Tharps, 2001; Greene, White, & Whitten, 2000; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, & Ward, 1987; Parmer, Arnold, Natt, & Janson, 2004; Russell, et al., 1992).

Protective Socialization

The four findings from the second study question provide empirical evidence regarding the current state of protective socialization within the African American community as well as specific efforts that are being made toward this end. First, 51% of participants stated they had not had parenting caregiver(s) or anyone else talk with them or do anything else that they felt helped protect them from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community. Second, participants who felt protectively socialized described influential others making efforts to educate them about skin color bias, their history, and how to think about themselves and others. Third, these participants also described specific environments that they found to be protective – typically those that were free from bias and provided them with correction and guidance when needed. And, fourth, a small number of responses from those who stated they had been protectively socialized reflected efforts made by parenting caregiver(s) to help their children get along with the reality of skin color bias rather than protect them from its psychological impact. These four findings all add new and vital information to the preexisting body of knowledge related to skin color bias.

Implications of Study Findings

Almost 20 years prior to this study, Hughes and Hertel (1990) considered the possibility that skin color, by itself, functioned as a diffuse status characteristic impacting one's treatment based on the unconscious and unintentional interpretations and judgments

of others. Maddox and Gray's (2002) study strongly suggested that it did. And this thesis complements these two studies by shedding light on the ways that stereotypes, preferences, and ideas about appropriate behavior are transmitted and impact the lives of many African Americans within the African American community.

Implications and Recommendations for African Americans

Intergenerational Transmission and Unrecognized Exposure

The frequency with which the elementary school years, one's peers, and/or teasing, ridicule, and mistreatment comprise participants' earliest and most noteworthy experiences is highly significant because it shows just how early the transmission and perpetuation of skin color bias begins. Further, if early, recognized exposure often takes place in the elementary school years from peers, then it seems logical to suggest that there must be some unrecognized exposure taking place before that in order for the children to learn what to pass on. This, in conjunction with the preponderance of skin color bias found to be demonstrated within African American families, strongly suggests intergenerational transmission of this phenomenon.

Not only do the findings of this study suggest intergenerational transmission but so does the similarity in tone between the findings from Parrish's (1946) studies and this one. Parrish's study participants were probably the equivalent of the parents and grandparents of most of this study's participants. And, while Parrish's studies and this one studied skin color bias from different angles, their findings are highly complementary to a degree that is disturbing given the time lag of more than six decades between them. It is unlikely that elementary school age children are coming up with skin color bias on their own or that their views on it happen to match those from the earlier half of the

twentieth century simply by chance. Rather, it more likely that somehow, like a virus, skin color bias is being passed from one generation to the next and it is happening early enough that elementary school age children are already infected by the virus, acting it out, reinforcing it, and perhaps even spreading it to their peers. It is likely that these children are exposed to the virus by influential others, most likely in the home, well before elementary school. These exposures are likely subtle enough that they are not noticed or considered noteworthy, since exposures of this kind were not regularly reported by the participants in this study.

Intentional Educational Efforts

> *"It will take real effort to try and re-educate our own to love each other and help each other not promote this madness among ourselves."*
> *-- 71-year-old participant in this study*

The evidence that early, unintentional education in skin color bias is taking place within African American homes, coupled with the themes of education and active environment management that were so important to study participants who felt protectively socialized against skin color bias from within the African American community, suggests that intentional educational efforts throughout the community would be beneficial.

Educational efforts throughout the community are suggested because they provide one way of reaching current and future parenting caregivers who may be concerned about the legacy they are passing on to their children. These efforts also reach out to the countless other members of the African American community that this study indicates are influential in young peoples' lives, including teachers, community leaders, church members, and extended family members.

These educational efforts could include the creation and offering of educational seminars and curriculums for communities, churches, and schools about African American history, the social construction of race, white supremacy, skin color bias, and the importance of developing and supporting liberation consciousness (cf. Freire, 1970/2000) in the community and nationwide. A train-the-trainer model could also be used to teach and empower parents, teachers, church leaders, and other community members interested in carrying this message forward.

However, it will be important to include in any such dialogues an open acknowledgement of the systemic and environmental influences that act upon and infect individuals and also provide tacit support for their biased behavior and/or thoughts. This is critically important when encouraging and supporting individual acknowledgement of acts of oppression.

For African Americans, it is also important to be reminded that skin color bias was not created within the African American community. Instead it is a direct derivative of white supremacist oppression that has been internalized along with all the other internalized self-hate teachings that are derived from white supremacist ideologies. Indeed, it is virtually impossible for anyone living in the United States to avoid internalizing these ideologies whether they are socialized to oppress or dominate or whether they are socialized to accept that oppression is the norm, or even deserved or justified.

The inescapability of this indoctrination and subsequent internalization is further complicated by the fact that white supremacy, from which skin color bias is derived, finds its resting place in the lie of race and the myriad lies related to inferiority and

superiority that feed off of it. For when the lie of race is believed, it becomes that much harder to resist all the other untruths that were created to support white supremacy. And soon, all the negative messages, "misinformation" (Alleyne, 2004, p. 49), and stereotypes about the oppressed groups' "abilities and intrinsic worth" (Jones, C. P., 2000, p. 1213) are internalized.

Therefore, no one living in the United States should be surprised to find white supremacist fueled ideologies and stereotypes in their midst or in themselves. Nor should one ounce of energy be expended on blaming the individual who acted on it (even when that individual is yourself). It is more beneficial, instead, to offer education, awareness, and teachings of love and liberation. Rather than berating the poor victims of internalized skin color bias, the question to be put to them is whether they are interested a cure for their condition.

And, if they are, they must recognize that they can only change themselves and then seek to impact those within their sphere of influence. This will primarily be within the homes that they head up. It is there that they can begin to nullify and reverse the terrible phenomenon of skin color bias. It is there that they must be vigilant about what is taught, said, and experienced in their homes. And it is there that they must prepare their children for what they might experience outside the home. It is also there that they can model making skin color bias safe to talk about – even when mistakes are made while attempting to do so. And it is there that efforts can and must be made to heal from the madness of white supremacist ideologies. The findings of this study suggest that this would have a critical impact on the intergenerational transmission of skin color bias within the African American community given the influence of the home. Indeed,

participant responses to the second study question about protective socialization provide a helpful starting point when seeking to understand what other members of the African American community are doing that may or may not helpful.

The need for protective socialization. First, in reviewing the findings related to protective socialization, it is notable that 49% of participants stated they had parenting caregiver(s), or other influential individuals, engage with them at some point in a way that they felt helped protect them from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community. This combined total, representing protection from any source, exceeded study expectations. And yet this, in conjunction with both the 51% who felt they received nothing in this regard and with the findings from the first study question, makes it evident that the African American community would benefit from more of its members being proactively involved in this regard. Making positive and protective socialization a part of African American culture and regular practices is important -- on the individual and familial levels and in local neighborhoods and communities.

Education as protective socialization. Second, it is clear from participant responses that education is extremely important. Their responses cover education in the areas of how to think about one's self, the existence of skin color bias, African American history, and how to think about African Americans who demonstrate skin color bias. These are each discussed below.

In the first area of education, participant responses suggest that it is important for African Americans to teach their children to be purposefully positive and loving toward themselves and others. Each generation of African Americans will need to learn how to embrace their own appearance as well as the full range of beauty, personal potential,

value, and worth that exists within each individual. To do that, they need to be taught to reject white supremacist lies about attractiveness, intelligence, and personality that all hinge on the falsity that those who are classified as white are automatically superior in all of these areas when compared to those who are not classified as white, for it is these lies that also teach that those who are closer to "white" in skin color are considered superior and more attractive to all those who are further away from it. It will be important to find a framework that reinforces truth and love for all in order to negate the lies, hatred, and devaluation comprising the oppression of white supremacy.

In the second area of education, participant responses suggest that it is important for African Americans to speak openly with their children about the existence of skin color bias within the African American community. For decades, those writing about this issue have commented on its taboo nature and African American denial of it. But, ironically, African American denial of skin color bias appears to have inadvertently contributed to its power and perpetuity. It may have also added to the confusion and pain of African Americans who experience skin color bias at the hands of other African Americans. This added confusion and pain, well above what is understandably expected in response to this abuse, exists primarily because African Americans are often unaware of the history of skin color bias in the United States as well as its inherent divisiveness.

African Americans can reverse this trend by acknowledging and addressing the issue directly – with themselves and with their children. However, it is important to remember to create a safe space for these conversations. This can, in part, be accomplished by studying the history of the issue (cf. Okazawa-Rey et al., 1987; Russell et al., 1992), embracing truth and compassion for self and others, and choosing to work

within a framework of connection and love that will hold and support discussion and growth with regard to this issue.

In the third area of education, participant responses suggest that it is important for African Americans to teach their children about their history and, as mentioned above, about the full history and origins of skin color bias. Awareness of history is critically important for progress on this issue because it provides invaluable perspective on current circumstances and guides the formation of goals for the future. The importance of studying balanced literature on the subject and learning from those who have gone before cannot be overvalued. This study's findings also suggest that the use of personal stories by those teaching on this subject is of great value.

The findings also suggest that teaching appreciation for one's culture as well as an understanding of its formation and development is important. At the same time, it will also be important for upcoming generations to be taught that they are not limited or constrained by the current culture of their people and that they even contribute to its growth while in pursuit of their individual passions and personal excellence.

In the fourth area of education, participant responses suggest that it is important for African Americans to provide their children with ways of thinking about and responding to those who demonstrate skin color bias. The theme of suggestions participants were offered centered around recommendations that participants ignore skin color bias and take a dismissive attitude toward those who engaged in it. Unfortunately, while teaching children to ignore skin color bias provides some momentary protection, it does not defang skin color bias quite like equipping them with a true understanding of the issue does.

And taking a dismissive, blaming attitude toward those who demonstrate skin color bias, such as viewing them as disdainfully ignorant, is also a problematic response. This is primarily because, when using this response, an individual soothes wounds caused by the viral hatred of internalized messages of inferiority by responding with another form of hatred, albeit a milder one. This, then, supplants any opportunity to address the real problem which, ironically, has correctly been identified as ignorance. Ignorance is merely "the condition of being uneducated, unaware, or uninformed" (ignorance, n.d.) and, in this case, the perpetrators of skin color bias are typically ignorant of the extent to which white supremacist ideologies are influencing their beliefs and behaviors. What anyone perpetrating skin color bias needs is not disdain but education and enlightenment encapsulated in compassion and love. Responding to hurt with hurt may feel temporarily protective, but it retards true progress on this issue and harms the African American community as a whole.

African Americans should extend this same compassion, love, and continued education, or re-education, to themselves as well. The small number of participants who acknowledged their own acting out of skin color bias addressed their behavior by blaming themselves. One participant declared himself to be "shallow" because he was more interested in light-skinned girls, "not because they were necessarily prettier" but because "they would be more likely to be approved by [his] peers." While on one level he has acknowledged his behavior as wrong and accepted responsibility for it, he has also accepted *too* much responsibility and will thus likely find the true means of escape from this way of thinking eluding him. Instead, education in, and acknowledgement of, his virtually unavoidable indoctrination into society's white supremacist ideologies would

provide him with critical context for proper assessment of his behavior *and* for helping him to expel the lies from his thinking that have held hurtful latitude in his behavior.

Active management of the environment. While participant responses suggest that protective socialization is needed and that education is an important part of that, their responses indicate that active oversight and involvement in shaping and choosing the environments in which children live, grow, and learn is equally valuable. Participant responses suggest that creating a home free of favoritism based on skin color is important. Their responses also suggest that taking disciplinary action and providing re-education, when needed, is beneficial. In addition, taking note of the influence of the environments to which children are exposed (e.g., school, church, and community) and reducing their exposure to environments still steeped in skin color bias is also supportive of them.

Moreover, while it is fortunate that some participants found skin color bias to not be an issue in the environments in which they grew up, this does not appear to reflect the general level of impact this issue has had, given the empirical and anecdotal data in the literature. Thus, proactive management of this issue appears to be preferable.

Reducing reliance on acceptance and adaptation. Participants mentioned many influential others who found creative ways to cope with the reality of skin color bias. These influential others are to be commended for persevering on the difficult road they have traveled. However, some of the coping methods utilized, such as accepting the existence of, and adapting to, white supremacist ideologies were always personally detrimental and have ceased to be even moderately helpful. African Americans deserve

the peace inherent in accepting their natural appearances and ways of presentation and style even when these are different from those of the dominating group.

Assimilation and covering up one's true self for the purpose of improving one's chances of acceptance by the dominating group can provide a measure of economic, professional, or social progress but always at a cost to both the individual and the community. And once individuals have been accepted by the dominating group while wearing these masks, they find themselves trapped into wearing the masks forever unless they are willing to risk rejection. While taking the mask off while so many others are still wearing theirs does involve individual cost, it also yields both individual and community gain, especially in the long term.

Liberation consciousness. All of the above comments and recommendations can be categorized under the larger umbrella of building and strengthening liberation consciousness in the African American community. It is important for African Americans to realize that the African American community, as a whole, has not yet come out from under the effects of oppression and slavery in this country. There is still much to be done and the entire community would be benefited from adopting a liberation consciousness perspective and a long-term focus on unshackling the minds and lives of people living in the United States from white supremacist ideologies, practices, and their results (cf. Freire, 1970/2000).

Often this will mean the choice, as an individual, between personal sacrifice for community gain or personal compromise for short-term gain but long-term community loss. While choosing personal sacrifice may be a difficult choice, it is a choice that recognizes the needs of the African American community and is bent on community

progress. It does require sacrifice, but it is on the blood, sweat, tears, and sacrifice of African American elders and ancestors that African Americans have made the great strides of progress that they have. And the decisions and choices the African American community makes today will determine the legacy left to future generations.

It is easy to imagine that the African American community would overwhelmingly desire for the issue of skin color bias, six decades from now, to look very different in the African American community if it even existed at all (cf. Parrish, 1946). But, in order to get there, the choices of today must be examined and adjusted to support the desired outcomes of tomorrow. The above thoughts and ideas, most of which were generated or inspired by this study's participants and the efforts already underway, provide a place from which to begin.

Future Study Related to Skin Color Bias (in General)

In reviewing the literature and findings for this study as well as the discussion thereof, certain key points arise that suggest areas for future study. For example, the early, recognized, exposure to skin color bias often taking place in the elementary school years from peers combined with the high prevalence of skin color bias within African American families suggests that there is very likely some unrecognized exposure taking place earlier than the elementary school years in order for the children to learn what to pass on. Therefore, a goal for future study would be to understand how skin color bias is being transferred in the early years when those exposed are not completely aware of what they are receiving and they were exposed to it in ways that were largely unconscious or unintentional on the part of the one influencing them.

With that said, however, extensive research into the exact methods of transmission may not be warranted in that it is clear that it is occurring. While it is important to understand how it is being unconsciously transmitted and received in order to craft effective strategies to stop it, it is also important to do research into effective methods of mitigating its effect and spread once it has already been taught, since that is what has long been happening and is happening still. Because the need for action on this issue is so great, perhaps the research into mitigating its effect and spread could take place simultaneously with actual on-the-ground efforts to do so.

Another area for future study stems from the possible connection between the unconscious transmission of skin color bias and its historically taboo nature within the African American community. While skin color bias may not be actively spoken about by African Americans, it is still being transmitted from one generation to the next. This, in conjunction with Pérez Foster's (1998) observation of the unconscious enactment, albeit with therapists, of that which is unspoken, repressed, or defended against suggests that another area of study would be the exploration of theories that facilitate an understanding of the import and effect of that which is silently and secretly carried. It is quite likely that it is the unspoken nature of skin color bias in the African American community that fuels its power and continues to give it life, generation after generation.

The clear similarities between Parrish's (1946) study and this one, along with Gullickson's (2005) important emphasis on studying subtle shifts and changes from one generation to the next, suggest that analysis and study by generation would be important to do in the future. This would be helpful in pointing out areas of progress and/or regression. In fact, further analysis could even be conducted on the data gathered for this

study. The existing skin color bias categories could be analyzed by age cohort and compared. The same could be done for the protective socialization data to assess whether additional or different efforts are being put forth now.

Another interesting area of future study relates to Keith and Herring's (1991) path analysis related to skin color advantage. From their analysis, Keith and Herring concluded that the ongoing influence of bias, preference, and differential treatment based on skin color has its own effect on outcomes (e.g., education, occupation, and income) that is in addition to any historical advantage. If their conclusion is correct, it would be particularly significant because it would show yet another area where the persistent reverberation of white supremacist ideologies continues to impact the lives of many. However, the tool of path analysis is not universally accepted as valid (Games, 1988; Sprinthall, 2003). Therefore, given that this study clearly showed a continuation of bias, preference, and differential treatment based on skin color, it would be worthwhile to conduct further research that would confirm whether the results of Keith and Herring's path analysis were correct.

In pilot conversations and in the course of reviewing the literature (e.g., Hall, R. E., 1992; Jones, T., 2000; Tummala-Narra, 2007), it was observed that issues related to skin color difference were not limited to the African American population. There was evidence that, at the very least, Filipino, East Indian, Latino, and Caribbean cultures were also impacted by this phenomenon. Thus, it appears that exploring the experience of this phenomenon in other cultures would also be of value.

Finally, a thorough review of the theory of social psychology and the additional perspectives it offers on the phenomenon of skin color bias are outside the scope of this

study. However, the concepts it holds and its demonstrated usefulness in the literature reviewed for this study (Maddox & Gray, 2002; Parrish, 1946) suggests that this theoretical perspective would be helpful in future analysis and study of this topic, especially in the area of understanding the use of stereotypes and the role they play in skin color bias.

Implications and Recommendations for Mental Health Clinicians

The mental health profession has largely neglected the topic of skin color bias in spite of the strongly negative influences it can have on an individual's intrapsychic and interpersonal processes. This study's findings contain descriptions of teasing, ridicule, name calling, mistreatment, exclusion, familial strife and division, as well as feelings of shame, inferiority, or even false superiority, all as a result of skin color bias. It is unfathomable that any combination of these experiences would not have an intrapsychic or interpersonal impact on clients, and also clinicians, who are African American. Certainly, it is true that the intensity of these experiences in concert with the myriad other factors that shape one's individual constitution and mental health will mitigate or exacerbate the impact of these experiences. And, when exploring this issue, it is entirely possible that nothing relevant to treatment will emerge for some clients. But for those for whom it does, it will often be hugely significant in their lives. And, of course, for many others, its significance will fall somewhere in between.

Because of the range of possible significance for clients, it seems unwise for clinicians to overlook this topic in treatment. Indeed, many of our clients are either ignorant of the influence of this phenomenon or hiding from it. Avoiding this issue would be to join the countless influential others in their lives who said nothing and, essentially,

amounts to colluding with them in their ignorance or shame. This is not a position that any mental health clinician can afford to take.

Further, it would behoove all clinicians, regardless of how they would be racially classified in the United States, to learn more about the phenomenon of skin color bias and to search within themselves regarding the issue. This is because skin color bias is a derivative of white supremacy, the ideologies of which are taught and surreptitiously implanted in the psyches of every individual living in the United States. Indeed, it would be a disservice to clients to not do this work, for clinicians never know when that which has been hidden, suppressed, or denied can play an active role in the transference and countertransference -- and can do so while operating beneath the consciousness of the clinician (Pérez Foster, 1998, 1999). Therefore, as with any issue, mental health clinicians are called to be proactive in examining and developing themselves in order to be more effective for their clients.

It should also be noted that the Clinical Implications section of the Literature Review for this study contained may practical suggestions and recommendations for how clinicians might approach exploring skin color bias within themselves and with their clients. It is recommended that clinicians review the Clinical Implications section and the literature there referenced for guidance on incorporating exploration of this issue into their future work.

In addition, it will be important for clinicians to think about what changes might be necessary in the mental health profession (in academic curricula, clinical work, research, and social justice) and what theories might be most helpful in order to assist those whose lives are negatively impacted by this derivative of white supremacy. It will

also be important for mental health clinicians to determine what roles they could play in implementing these changes and using, or crafting, the theories that will make for positive change in this area. Clinically, one helpful change would be the development of new assessment tools, or addendums to the old, that will help clinicians better understand the nature of their clients' problems in this area and gain insight into how to better assist them.

Future Study Related to Skin Color Bias (with a Clinical Focus)

The clinical significance section of the literature review for this study addresses many of the valiant efforts clinicians have already been making in their consulting rooms to acknowledge and address the impact of skin color bias in their clients' lives. However, the literature's emphasis on anecdotal evidence from case studies demonstrates the need for clinical research into effective approaches.

It will be important to conduct research into what clinical theories and practices are most helpful for addressing skin color bias in the consulting room, especially when discussing it has long been taboo. Among these, it will be important to determine which can be implemented and are most effective in short-, medium-, and long-term treatments.

Another key area on which to focus will be the impact of skin color bias on treatment when both the clinician and client are African American. Skin color, personal experiences, and the degree of internalized skin color bias for both will all come to bear in this dyad. Studying the additional work the clinician needs to do to be effective will be important.

Similarly, it will be important to explore the impact on treatment when the clinician is classified with those who have traditionally oppressed and received privilege

from the oppression of white supremacy (i.e., when the clinician would be classified, in the United States, as white). Skin color as well as racial classifications, personal experiences (especially those related to white supremacy), and the degree of internalized skin color bias for both will all come to bear in this dyad. Studying the additional work the clinician needs to do to be more effective will be important.

Generalizability

This study revealed some of the ways in which skin color bias is being transmitted within the African American community and certain of the protective practices that are being utilized to mitigate its impact on future generations. Although the sample's size, nonrandomized nature, and skewed regional representation limit the generalizability of this study's data, the conclusions and recommendations presented above are offered without hesitation given the findings' considerable consistency with the existing literature on skin color bias. Nevertheless, future study with both smaller and more in-depth qualitative studies as well as larger, quantitative studies would be warranted in order to expand the profession's understanding of the issues related to skin color bias.

Bias

Two-thirds of what we see is behind our eyes.
– Chinese Proverb

Journey to this Topic and Influence of Personal Experiences

In *The clinician's cultural countertransference: The psychodynamics of culturally competent practice*, Pérez Foster (1998) talked about personally avoiding the exploration of any "painful issues about color discrimination with a dark-skinned client" (p. 261). She further went on to talk about realizing that "'silencing' her clients was [her] way of

avoiding the double-edged guilt and pride of [her] own racial experience: growing up as the lightest skinned child in a darker-skinned Caribbean family" (p. 261).

Reading this caused me, the researcher, to reflect on my own personal experience as the darker-skinned of two siblings. It also brought to mind the significance of skin color difference among African American siblings and the self-pride and self-hate these differences, combined with the messages received from family, peers, and the community about them, or about skin color in general, could bring. I realized that these kinds of experiences might be far from isolated incidents and a quick search for anecdotal evidence supported that. However, while there were studies showing the advantage of being a particular skin color or that certain study participants might prefer to be one color or another, there were not any studies that looked specifically at the transmission of skin color bias, especially within the African American community. And I knew that a key part of addressing a difficult set of circumstances would involve coming to understand them and how they were being perpetuated. I wanted to give voice to this aspect of skin color bias knowing that the hearing of that voice could impact and inform clinicians and educators as they work with the African American population, in general, and as they work with them, specifically, around the issues of skin color difference and internalized white supremacy. My hope was that it would also impact and inform African American families and inspire them to take a proactive stance against this destructive residue of white supremacy.

Because I am part of the African American community and also have personal experiences related to this subject, my view of this subject cannot help but be informed by these circumstances. However, in conducting this research I sought to gather broad-

ranging descriptive data that would cover experiences that were perhaps very similar to and very different from mine. Skin color bias as well as issues of exclusion or changes in one's self-concept based on a false belief system impacts the entire African American community and I strove to be as open as possible to acknowledging the range of experiences that result.

In striving to manage my bias, expectations, and countertransference to participant responses, I realized that one drawback to the anonymity provided to all participants was the inability to engage participants in member checking as the findings were analyzed. I began to personally realize the imbalance of power that exists between any researcher and study participants and took careful note of it. In response, I redoubled my efforts to be aware of and minimize this imbalance as well as my bias in presenting this research.

Epistemological Stance

Part of my motivation for diligently managing my bias while conducting this research stemmed from my epistemological stance of fallibilistic realism. I drew on the epistemology of fallibilistic realism as a way of understanding that my observations would be the product of not only what existed, but also of the process of observation, the relationship between myself and the participants, and the lenses through which I viewed reality and subsequently selected the terms used to describe it (Anastas, 1999). As such, I sought to ground my conclusions and interpretations "in a convincing degree of detail from the data" (Anastas, 1999, p. 321) and to do so in a detailed enough manner "that the reader [could] draw [their own] independent conclusions" (p. 321). Even so, I

acknowledge that the codes I chose, whether in vivo or constructed, impacted the validity of both the data collection and data analysis processes (Anastas, 1999).

In Conclusion

Skin color bias continues to make its destructive rounds from generation to generation throughout the African American community. Fortunately, there is much that can be done to silence this echo of white supremacy. This will include awareness, acknowledgement, witnessing, education, determination, and action.

It will include awareness of skin color bias' existence and also that its historical origins lie, not in the African American community, but in the minds of those who embraced white supremacist ideologies in order to enslave and oppress Africans and their descendants.

It will include using this awareness to create safe spaces for acknowledgement and compassionate witnessing. This will mean acknowledgement of the likely presence, to varying degrees, of internalized skin color bias within each of us and also compassionate witnessing of the acknowledgement – by others and ourselves – of the skin color bias which has been acted out toward others and toward ourselves.

It will include taking the time to educate and be educated on how to mitigate the influence of skin color bias, prevent its spread, and protect future generations from its grasp. It will also include determining to make a difference based on what has been learned and taking action, whether big steps or small, to make positive changes within one's sphere of influence.

And silencing the echo will also include silencing the voice that generates the echo – white supremacy. This thesis is a call to action for mental health clinicians,

African Americans, and all those living in the larger community of the United States do their part to silence the echo.

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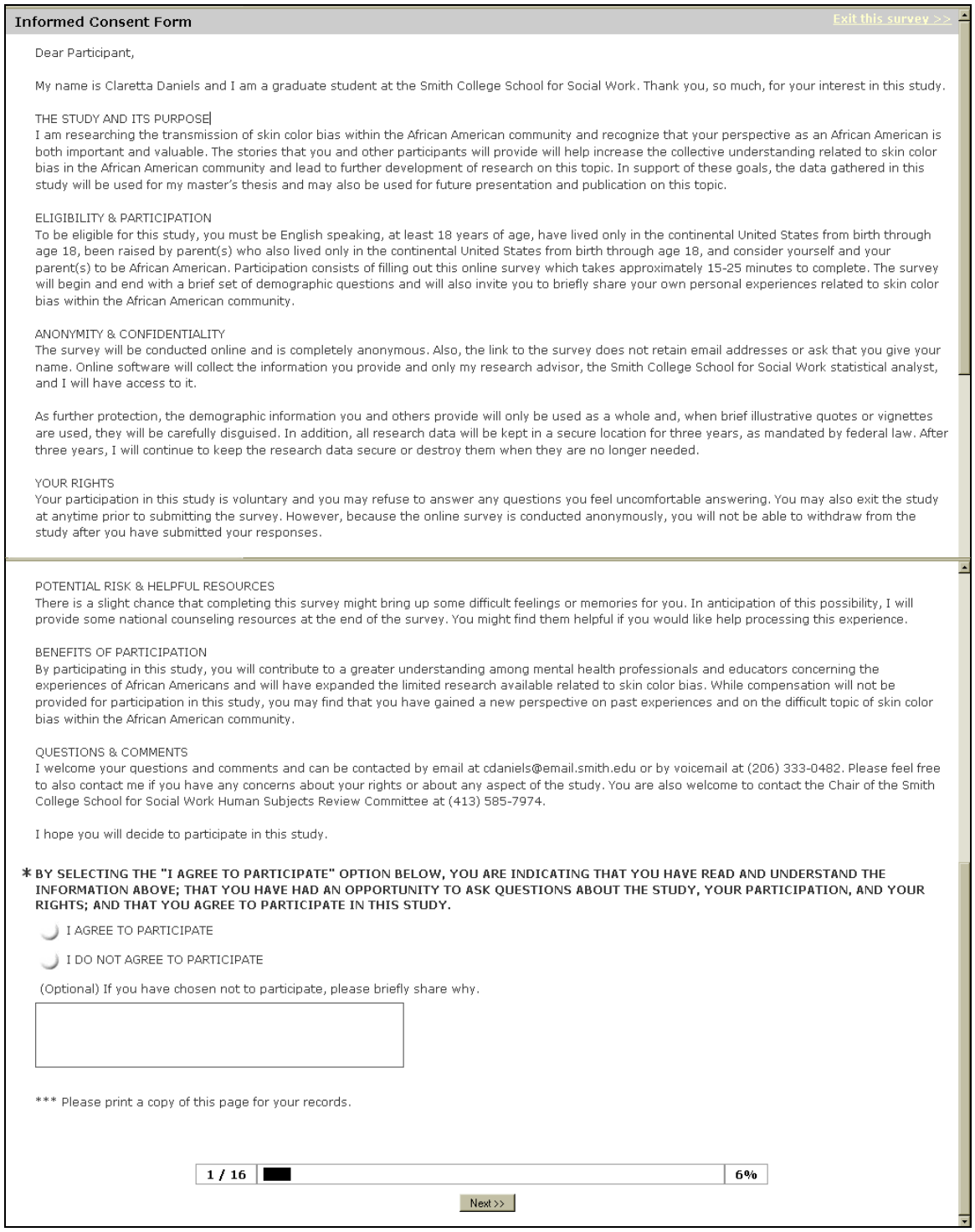
Appendix A

Survey Instrument



Informed Consent Form Exit this survey >>

Dear Participant,

My name is Claretta Daniels and I am a graduate student at the Smith College School for Social Work. Thank you, so much, for your interest in this study.

THE STUDY AND ITS PURPOSE
I am researching the transmission of skin color bias within the African American community and recognize that your perspective as an African American is both important and valuable. The stories that you and other participants will provide will help increase the collective understanding related to skin color bias in the African American community and lead to further development of research on this topic. In support of these goals, the data gathered in this study will be used for my master's thesis and may also be used for future presentation and publication on this topic.

ELIGIBILITY & PARTICIPATION
To be eligible for this study, you must be English speaking, at least 18 years of age, have lived only in the continental United States from birth through age 18, been raised by parent(s) who also lived only in the continental United States from birth through age 18, and consider yourself and your parent(s) to be African American. Participation consists of filling out this online survey which takes approximately 15-25 minutes to complete. The survey will begin and end with a brief set of demographic questions and will also invite you to briefly share your own personal experiences related to skin color bias within the African American community.

ANONYMITY & CONFIDENTIALITY
The survey will be conducted online and is completely anonymous. Also, the link to the survey does not retain email addresses or ask that you give your name. Online software will collect the information you provide and only my research advisor, the Smith College School for Social Work statistical analyst, and I will have access to it.

As further protection, the demographic information you and others provide will only be used as a whole and, when brief illustrative quotes or vignettes are used, they will be carefully disguised. In addition, all research data will be kept in a secure location for three years, as mandated by federal law. After three years, I will continue to keep the research data secure or destroy them when they are no longer needed.

YOUR RIGHTS
Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering. You may also exit the study at anytime prior to submitting the survey. However, because the online survey is conducted anonymously, you will not be able to withdraw from the study after you have submitted your responses.

POTENTIAL RISK & HELPFUL RESOURCES
There is a slight chance that completing this survey might bring up some difficult feelings or memories for you. In anticipation of this possibility, I will provide some national counseling resources at the end of the survey. You might find them helpful if you would like help processing this experience.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION
By participating in this study, you will contribute to a greater understanding among mental health professionals and educators concerning the experiences of African Americans and will have expanded the limited research available related to skin color bias. While compensation will not be provided for participation in this study, you may find that you have gained a new perspective on past experiences and on the difficult topic of skin color bias within the African American community.

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS
I welcome your questions and comments and can be contacted by email at cdaniels@email.smith.edu or by voicemail at (206) 333-0482. Please feel free to also contact me if you have any concerns about your rights or about any aspect of the study. You are also welcome to contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.

I hope you will decide to participate in this study.

* **BY SELECTING THE "I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE" OPTION BELOW, YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION ABOVE; THAT YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS; AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.**

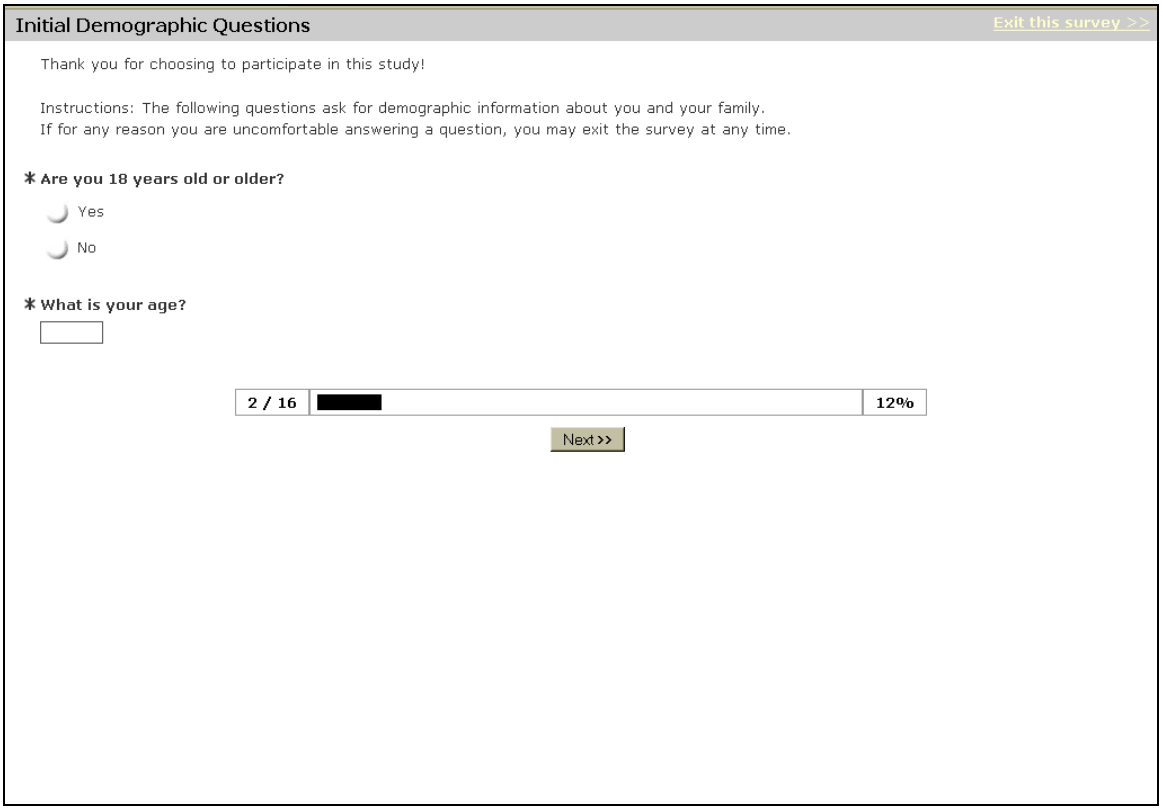
- I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE
- I DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE

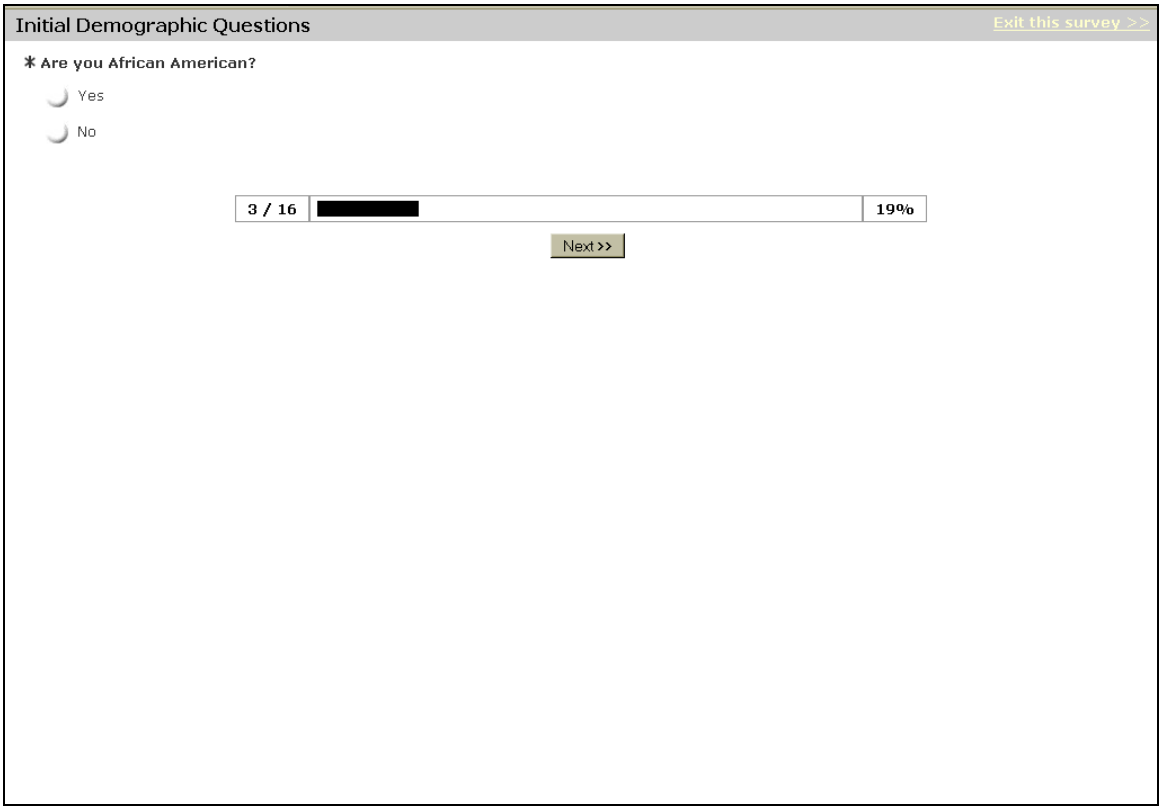
(Optional) If you have chosen not to participate, please briefly share why.

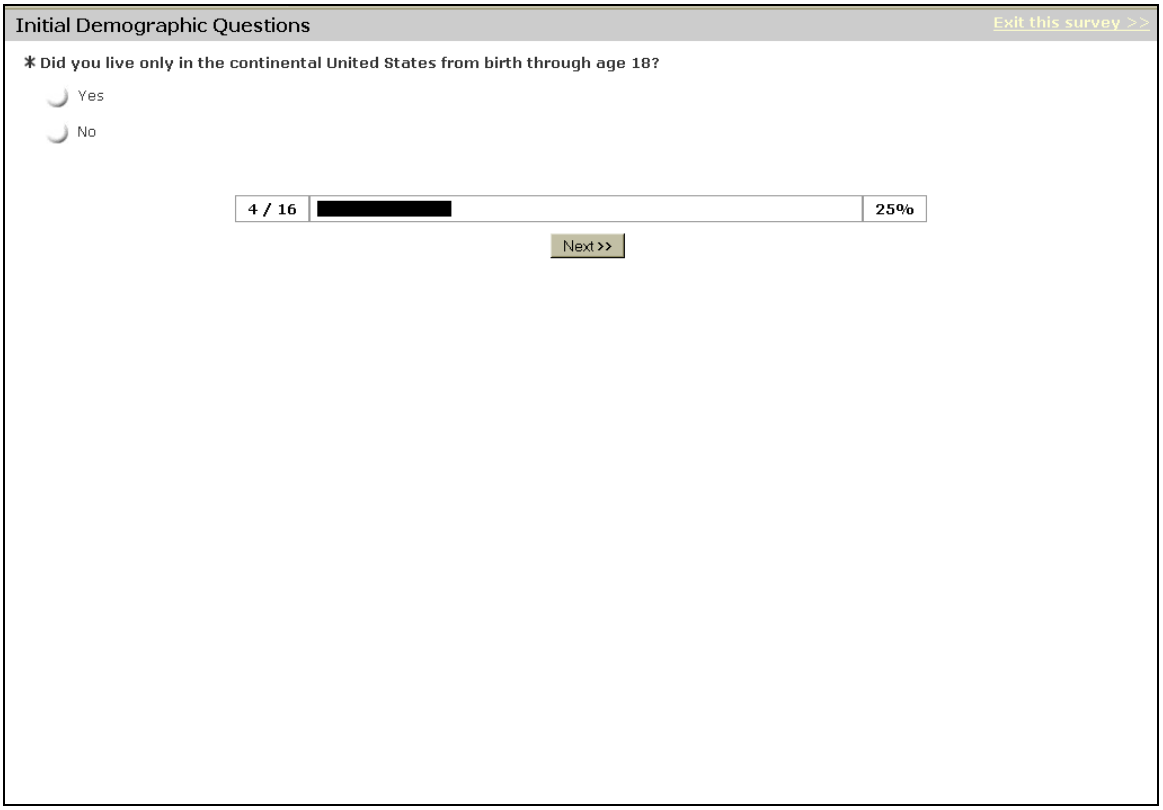
*** Please print a copy of this page for your records.

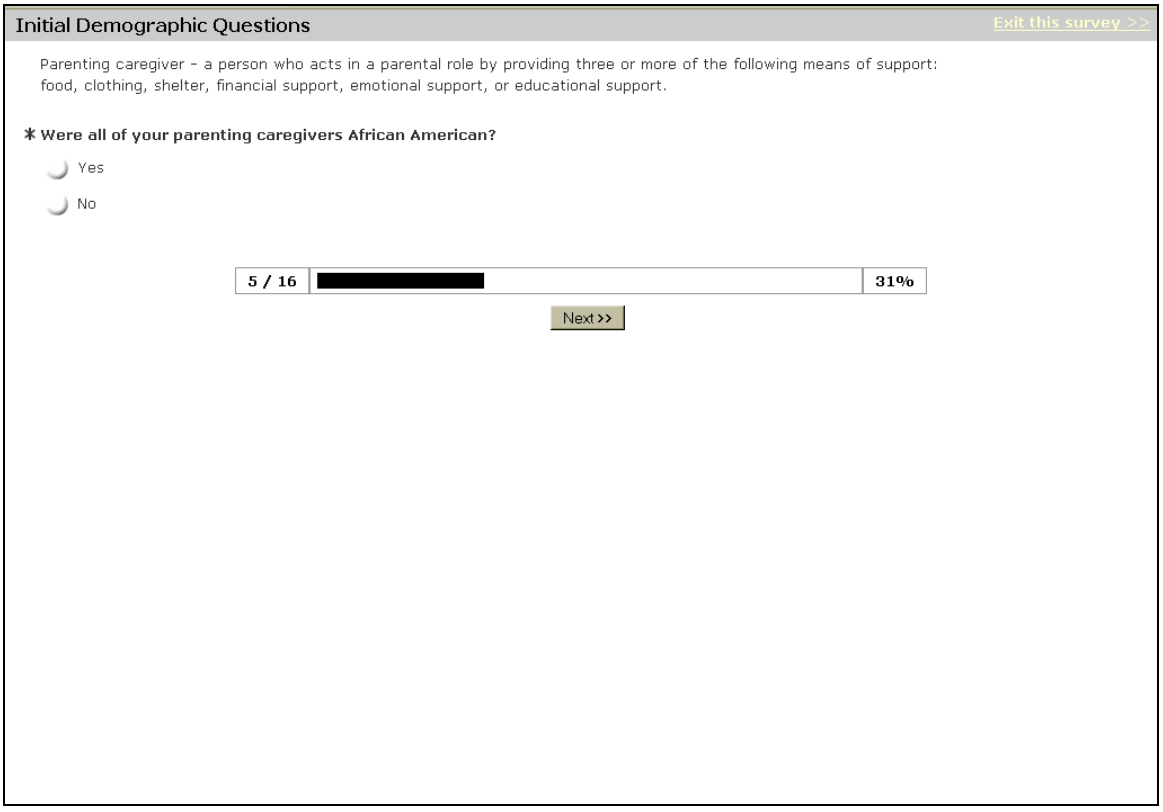
1 / 16 6%

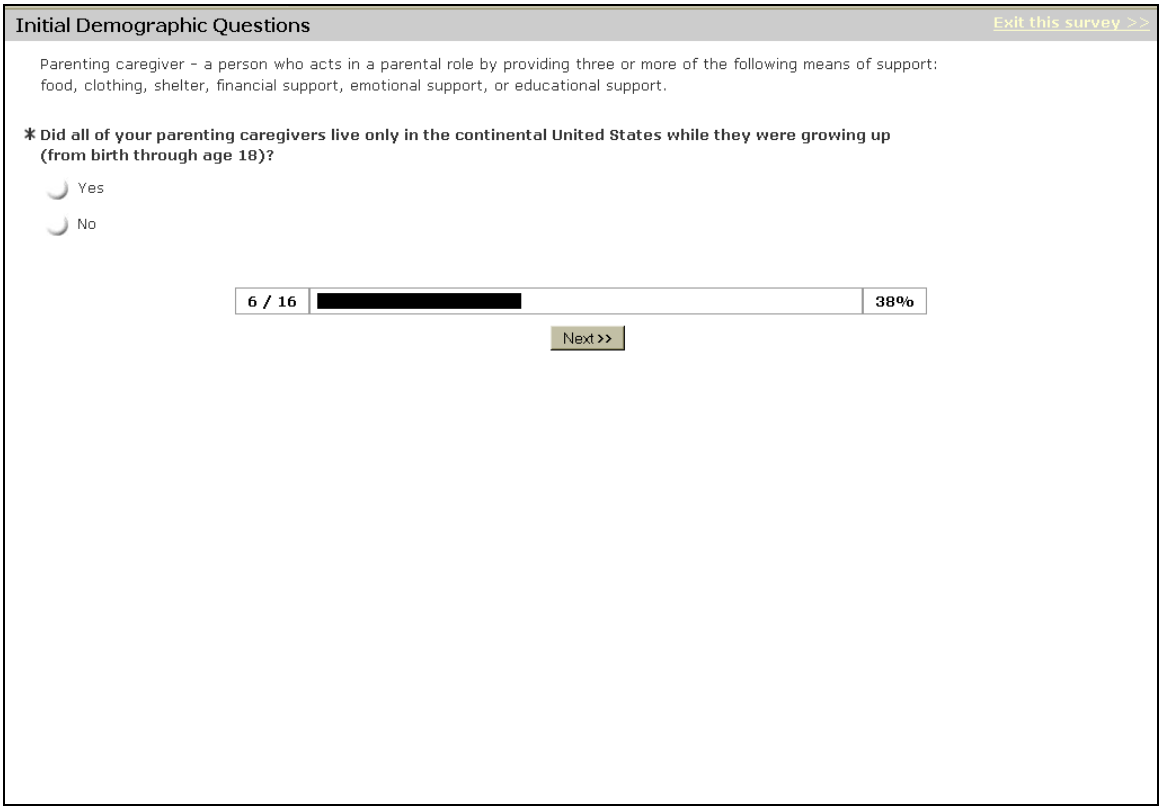
Next >>

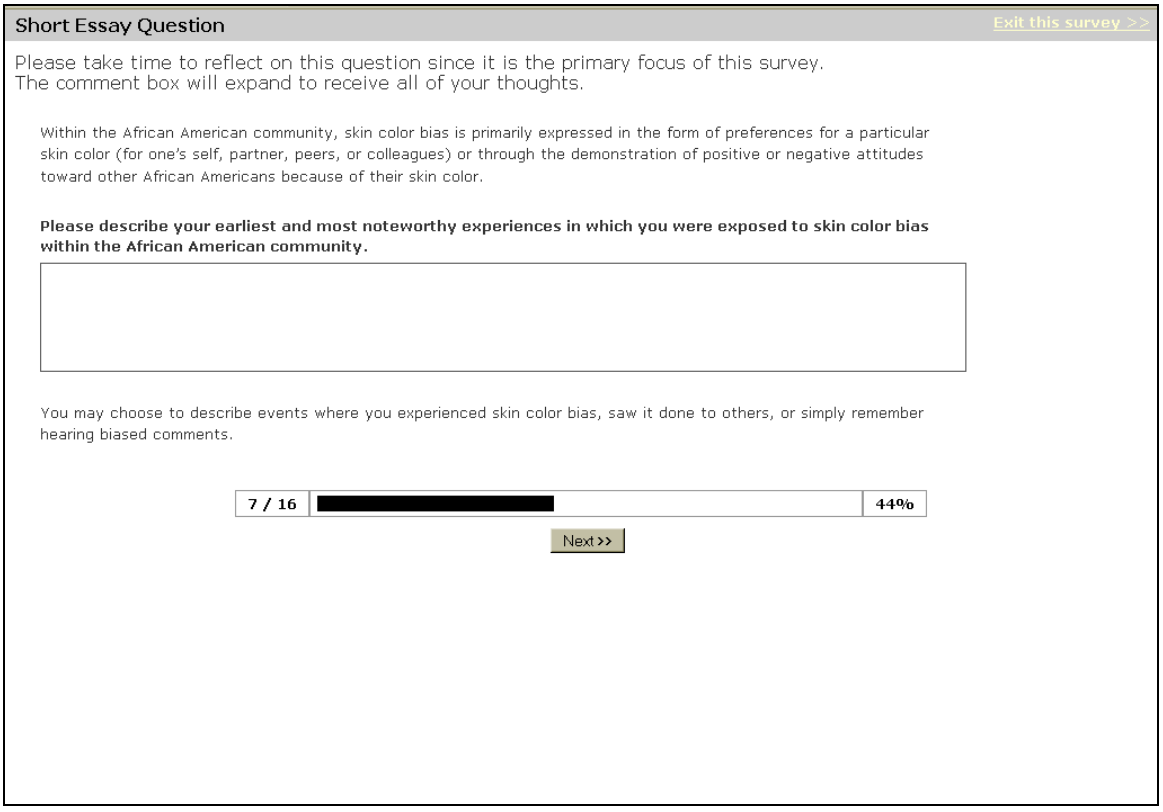

Initial Demographic Questions
Exit this survey >>
Thank you for choosing to participate in this study!
Instructions: The following questions ask for demographic information about you and your family.
If for any reason you are uncomfortable answering a question, you may exit the survey at any time.
* Are you 18 years old or older?
Yes
No
* What is your age?
2 / 16
12%
Next >>


Initial Demographic Questions
Exit this survey >>
* Are you African American?
Yes
No
3 / 16
19%
Next >>


Initial Demographic Questions
Exit this survey >>
* Did you live only in the continental United States from birth through age 18?
Yes
No
4 / 16
25%
Next >>


Initial Demographic Questions
Exit this survey >>
Parenting caregiver - a person who acts in a parental role by providing three or more of the following means of support: food, clothing, shelter, financial support, emotional support, or educational support.
* Were all of your parenting caregivers African American?
Yes
No
5 / 16
31%
Next >>


Initial Demographic Questions
Exit this survey >>
Parenting caregiver - a person who acts in a parental role by providing three or more of the following means of support: food, clothing, shelter, financial support, emotional support, or educational support.
* Did all of your parenting caregivers live only in the continental United States while they were growing up (from birth through age 18)?
Yes
No
6 / 16
38%
Next >>


Short Essay Question
Exit this survey >>
Please take time to reflect on this question since it is the primary focus of this survey.
The comment box will expand to receive all of your thoughts.
Within the African American community, skin color bias is primarily expressed in the form of preferences for a particular skin color (for one's self, partner, peers, or colleagues) or through the demonstration of positive or negative attitudes toward other African Americans because of their skin color.
Please describe your earliest and most noteworthy experiences in which you were exposed to skin color bias within the African American community.
You may choose to describe events where you experienced skin color bias, saw it done to others, or simply remember hearing biased comments.
7 / 16
44%
Next >>

Follow-up Questions

Exit this survey >>

Please select 'Yes' if your parenting caregiver(s) ever talked with you, or did other things, that you felt helped protect you from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community. If they did not, please select 'No'.

Yes No

If Yes, please describe briefly below...

If anyone else ever talked with you, or did other things, that you felt helped protect you from the impact of skin color bias within the African American community, please select 'Yes'. If not, please select 'No'.

Yes No

If Yes, please describe briefly below...

8 / 16 50%

Next >>

Additional Demographic Questions

Exit this survey >>

The following questions ask for demographic information about you and your family. Your input on all of these questions is valuable. However, if, for any reason, you are uncomfortable answering a question, you may skip it and proceed to the next question.

In which state did you live the longest while you were growing up (from birth to age 18)?

And how would you describe the area in which you lived during that time?

Rural/Country

Suburb/Town

Urban/City (Small)

Urban/City (Medium)

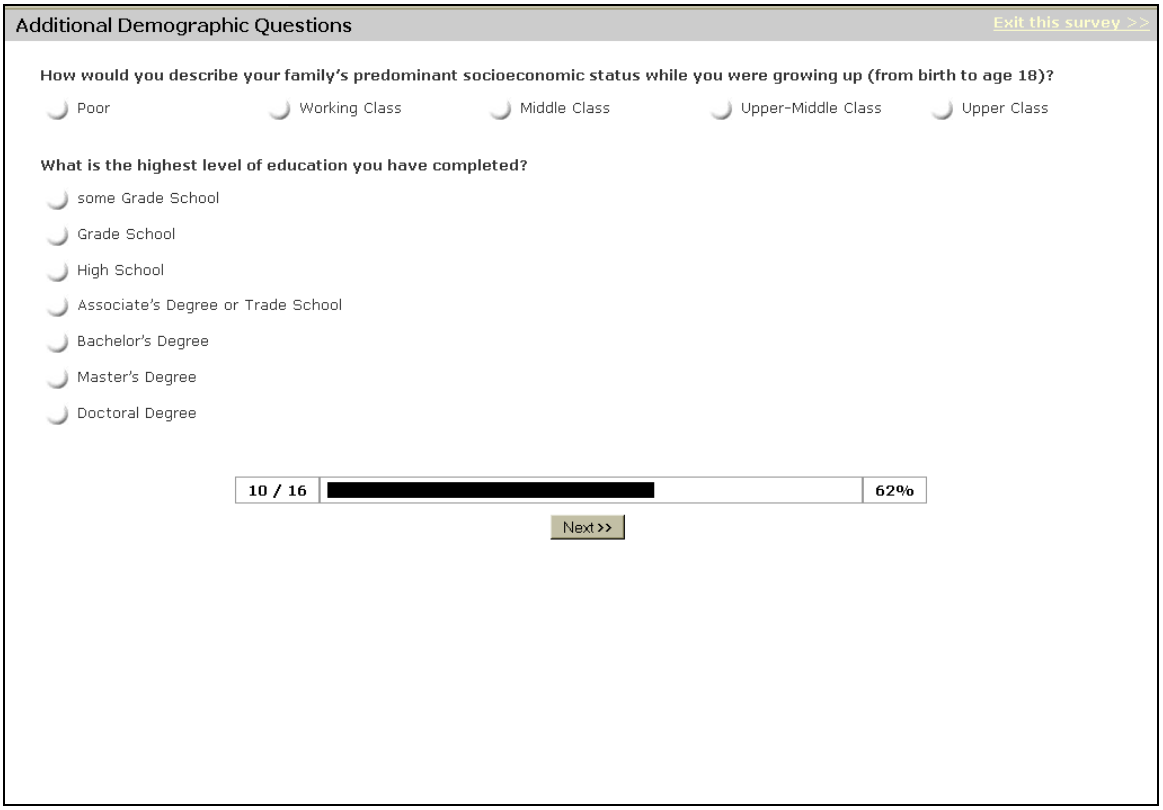
Urban/City (Large) (e.g. New York City or Los Angeles)

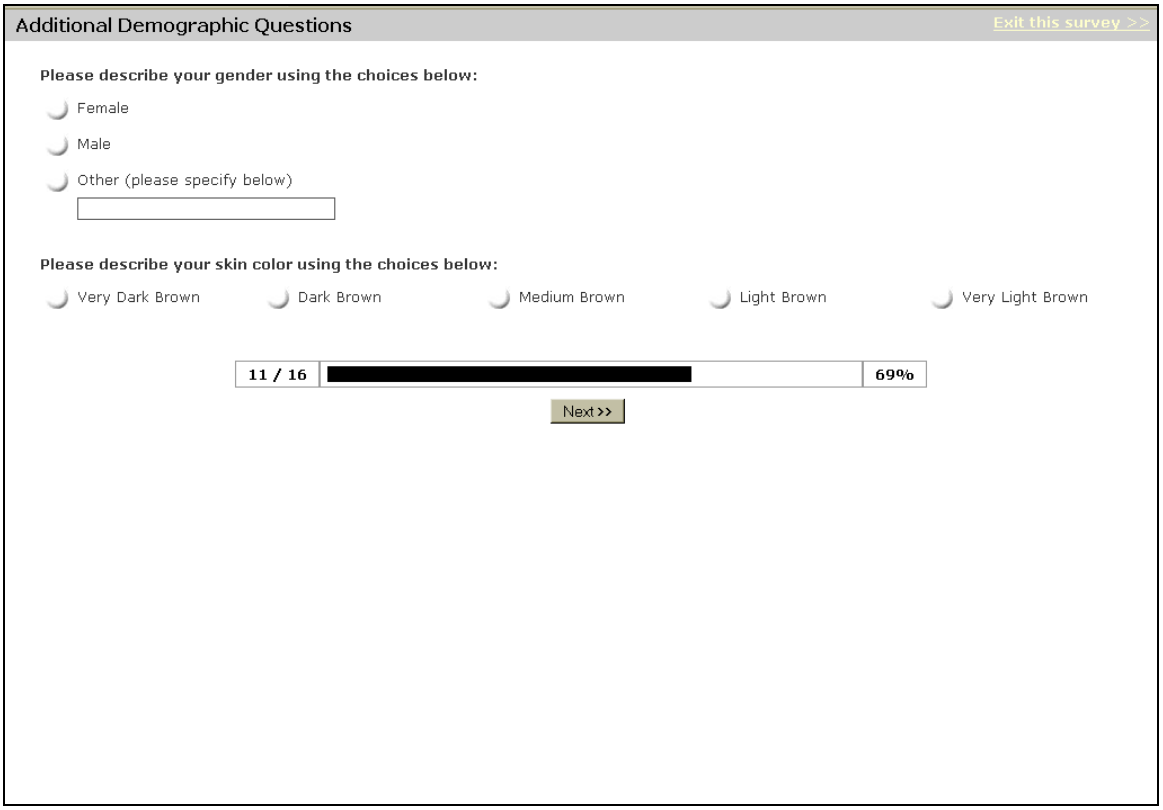
9 / 16 56%

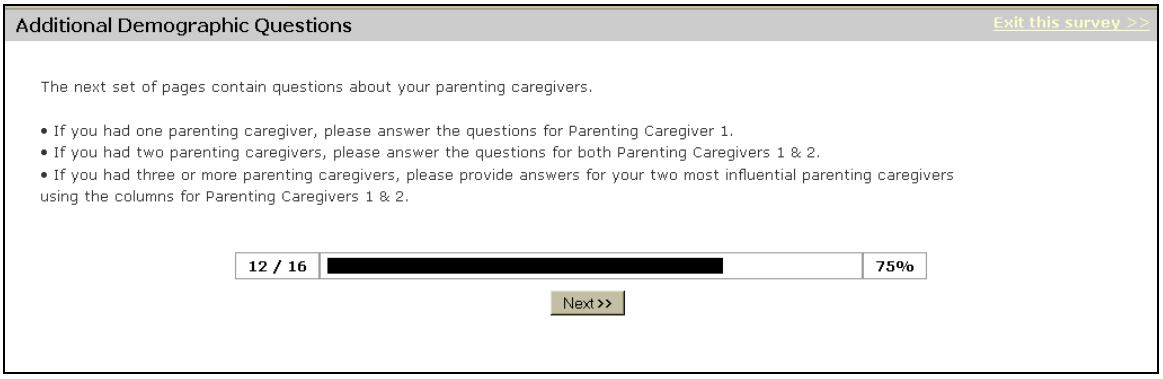
Next >>

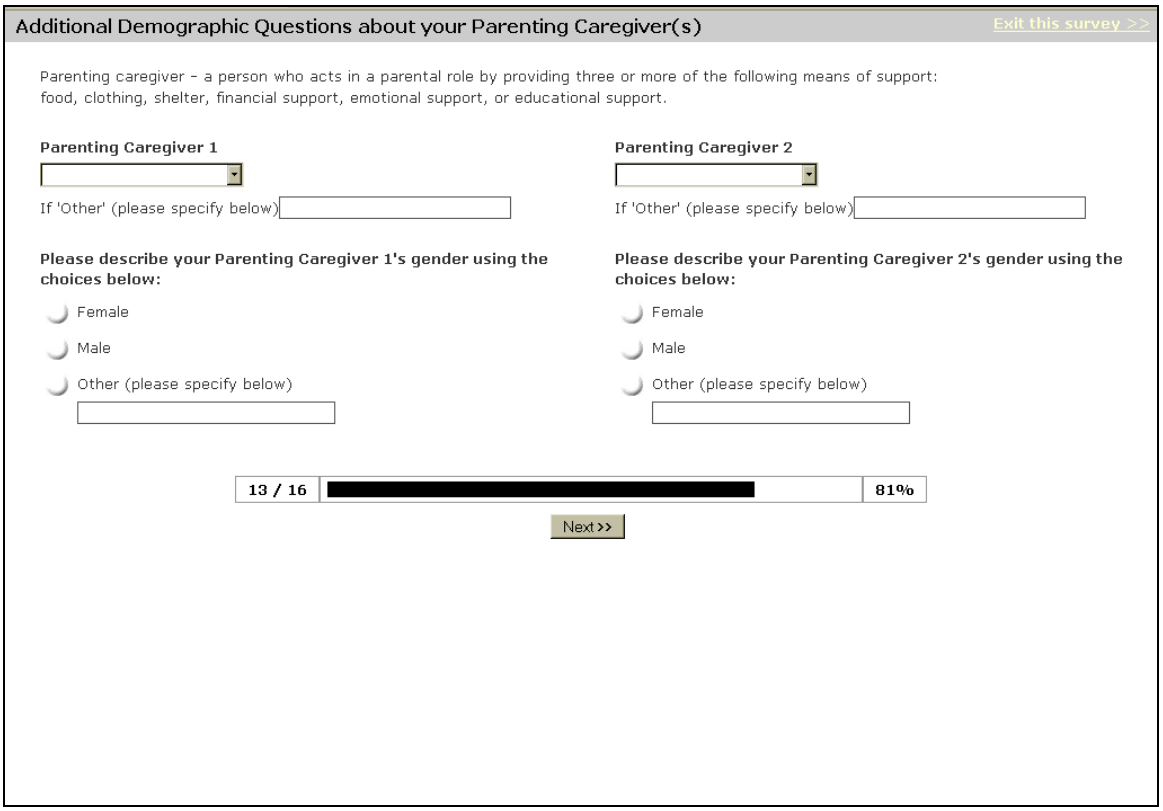
Participants were given the below drop down menu choices to answer the question “In which state did you live the longest while you were growing up (from birth to age 18)?”

AL Alabama
AZ Arizona
AR Arkansas
CA California
CO Colorado
CT Connecticut
DE Delaware
DC District of Columbia
FL Florida
GA Georgia
ID Idaho
IL Illinois
IN Indiana
IA Iowa
KS Kansas
KY Kentucky
LA Louisiana
ME Maine
MD Maryland
MA Massachusetts
MI Michigan
MN Minnesota
MS Mississippi
MO Missouri
MT Montana
NE Nebraska
NV Nevada
NH New Hampshire
NJ New Jersey
NM New Mexico
NY New York
NC North Carolina
ND North Dakota
OH Ohio
OK Oklahoma
OR Oregon
PA Pennsylvania
RI Rhode Island
SC South Carolina
SD South Dakota
TN Tennessee
TX Texas
UT Utah
VT Vermont
VA Virginia
WA Washington
WV West Virginia
WI Wisconsin
WY Wyoming


Additional Demographic Questions
Exit this survey >>
How would you describe your family's predominant socioeconomic status while you were growing up (from birth to age 18)?
Poor
Working Class
Middle Class
Upper-Middle Class
Upper Class
What is the highest level of education you have completed?
some Grade School
Grade School
High School
Associate's Degree or Trade School
Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Doctoral Degree
10 / 16
62%
Next >>

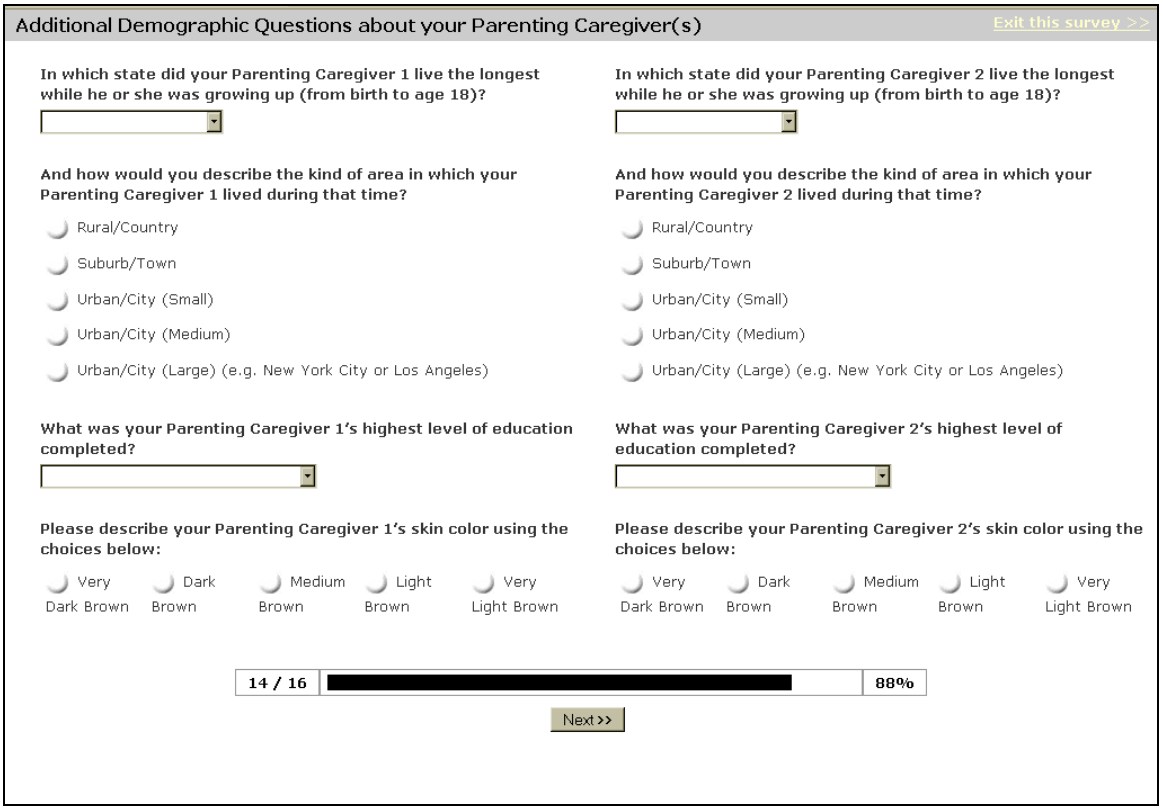

Additional Demographic Questions
Exit this survey >>
Please describe your gender using the choices below:
Female
Male
Other (please specify below)
Please describe your skin color using the choices below:
Very Dark Brown
Dark Brown
Medium Brown
Light Brown
Very Light Brown
11 / 16
69%
Next >>





Participants were given the below drop down menu choices to answer the questions “Parenting Caregiver 1” and “Parenting Caregiver 2.”

Mother
Father
Grandmother
Grandfather
Aunt
Uncle
Brother
Sister
Other _____



Participants were given the same 49 drop down menu choices to answer the questions "In which state did your Parenting Caregiver 1 live the longest while he or she was growing up (from birth to age 18)?" and "In which state did your Parenting Caregiver 2 live the longest while he or she was growing up (from birth to age 18)?" as were previously given for the question "In which state did you live the longest while you were growing up (from birth to age 18)?"

Participants were given the below drop down menu choices to answer the questions "What was your Parenting Caregiver 1's highest level of education completed?" and "What was your Parenting Caregiver 2's highest level of education completed?"

No formal education
some Grade School
Grade School
High School
Associate's Degree or Trade School
Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Doctoral Degree

Opportunity to provide additional comments or feedback

Exit this survey >>

Is there anything else you would like to share related to: (a) skin color bias within the African American community, (b) your personal experiences with skin color bias, or (c) this survey?

15 / 16 94%

Next >>

Thank you, so much... you're almost done!!

Exit this survey >>

Please click on the "Submit Survey >>" button below after reviewing this page.

Thank you, so much, for your contribution to this study.

For your convenience, I have listed below some counseling resources that you might find helpful should wish to process any feelings that came up as a result of completing this survey.

Help Finding a Professional Therapist
www.helppro.com/aspdocs/naswbsearch1.asp

Psychology Today's Therapy Directory
http://therapist.psychologytoday.com/nmha/

24-Hour Toll-Free Crisis Hotline (for immediate help in your area)
1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

Thank you, again.

Take care and be well,

Claretta Daniels
Researcher and Master's Candidate
Smith College School for Social Work
cdaniels@email.smith.edu
(206) 333-0482

*** Please click on the "Submit Survey >>" button below to submit your answers.

16 / 16 100%

Submit Survey >>

Appendix B

Approval Letter from the
Smith College Human Subjects Review Committee

February 19, 2008

Claretta Daniels

Dear Claretta,

Your amended materials have been reviewed and you did a fine job of revision. All is now in order and we are happy to give your study our final approval.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain signed consent documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project. We will also be expecting to get copies of permission letters from any organization where you recruit.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Mary Beth Averill, Research Advisor

Appendix C

Generic Announcement E-mail
(This was the first of two e-mails and was used if the recipient had already agreed to participate. This was modified accordingly if the recipient only agreed to forward the survey.)

Hi there, [Insert Name]

[Tailored introductory sentence]

Also, I very much appreciate your willingness to participate in my survey and forward it to as many people as you know who might be willing to take the survey.

I have included details about the survey, as well as the link for you to take it, in a separate e-mail to make it easy for you to forward to your friends, family, colleagues, etc.

Again, thank you, so much, for your help and participation! Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns whatsoever.

My best to you,

~C

==========
Claretta Daniels
Master's Candidate
Smith College School for Social Work
[*Personal cell number*] (Cell)
cdaniels@email.smith.edu
==========

Appendix D

Generic Solicitation E-mail - #1
(This was the first of two e-mails and was used if participant had not already agreed to participate in the survey.)

Hi there, [Insert Name]

I hope you are doing well!

As you may already know, I am currently a candidate for a Master's in Social Work and am working on a research project related to the transmission of skin color bias within the African American community.

I am in the process of looking for study participants for my online study and would be most grateful if you could help me in one, or both, of two ways:

- you can help by participating in my study, if you are willing and meet criteria, and
- you can help by forwarding the link to the survey to as many people as you know who might be willing to take the survey.

I have included more details about the survey, as well as the link for you to take it, in a separate e-mail to make it easy for you to forward to your friends, family, colleagues, etc.

I truly appreciate whatever level of help and participation you are able to offer. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns whatsoever.

My best to you,

~C

==========
Claretta Daniels
Master's Candidate
Smith College School for Social Work
[*Personal cell number*] (Cell)
cdaniels@email.smith.edu
==========

Appendix E

Generic Request to Participate E-mail - #2
(This was the second of two emails and was sent separately to make it easier for recipients to forward the request to participate email to others.)

Hello, there,

I hope that you are doing well!

My name is Claretta Daniels and I am a social work student at Smith College. As part of my schooling, I am conducting a study on the transmission of skin color bias within the African American community. I am also in the process of looking for study participants.

I would be most grateful if you could help me in one, or both, of two ways:

First, please participate in my study, if you are willing, by clicking on the link below (you can also copy and paste the link into your browser).
I am specifically looking for participants who are 18 years old or older, who lived only in the continental United States from birth through the age of 18, whose parent(s) lived only in the continental United States from birth through the age of 18, and who consider themselves and their parents to be African American.

Second, please help me recruit others by forwarding this email to as many people as you know who might be willing to participate in my study. Please forward this to your friends, family, book club, church members, sorority/fraternity group, colleagues, etc. As long as they have the link below, they can participate.

www.surveymonkey.com/aarc

Participation in the study consists of taking an online survey. The survey takes about 15-25 minutes to complete and is completely anonymous. In addition, the above link to the survey does not retain email addresses or ask for anyone's name and no specific answer can be traced back to any particular respondent. Please note that the survey web-site is open daily but will be temporarily closed each week from sunset on Friday through sunset on Saturday (ET).

www.surveymonkey.com/aarc

Thank you, so much, for taking the time to help me in whatever ways you could. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Claretta Daniels
Master's Candidate
Smith College School for Social Work
cdaniels@email.smith.edu
206.333.0482

Appendix F

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

My name is Claretta Daniels and I am a graduate student at the Smith College School for Social Work. Thank you, so much, for your interest in this study.

THE STUDY AND ITS PURPOSE

I am researching the transmission of skin color bias within the African American community and recognize that your perspective as an African American is both important and valuable. The stories that you and other participants will provide will help increase the collective understanding related to skin color bias in the African American community and lead to further development of research on this topic. In support of these goals, the data gathered in this study will be used for my master's thesis and may also be used for future presentation and publication on this topic.

ELIGIBILITY & PARTICIPATION

To be eligible for this study, you must be English speaking, at least 18 years of age, have lived only in the continental United States from birth through age 18, been raised by parent(s) who also lived only in the continental United States from birth through age 18, and consider yourself and your parent(s) to be African American. Participation consists of filling out this online survey which takes approximately 15-25 minutes to complete. The survey will begin and end with a brief set of demographic questions and will also invite you to briefly share your own personal experiences related to skin color bias within the African American community.

ANONYMITY & CONFIDENTIALITY

The survey will be conducted online and is completely anonymous. Also, the link to the survey does not retain email addresses or ask that you give your name. Online software will collect the information you provide and only my research advisor, the Smith College School for Social Work statistical analyst, and I will have access to it.

As further protection, the demographic information you and others provide will only be used as a whole and, when brief illustrative quotes or vignettes are used, they will be carefully disguised. In addition, all research data will be kept in a secure location for three years, as mandated by federal law. After three years, I will continue to keep the research data secure or destroy them when they are no longer needed.

YOUR RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering. You may also exit the study at anytime prior to submitting the survey. However, because the online survey is conducted anonymously, you will not be able to withdraw from the study after you have submitted your responses.

POTENTIAL RISK & HELPFUL RESOURCES

There is a slight chance that completing this survey might bring up some difficult feelings or memories for you. In anticipation of this possibility, I will provide some national counseling resources at the end of the survey. You might find them helpful if you would like help processing this experience.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

By participating in this study, you will contribute to a greater understanding among mental health professionals and educators concerning the experiences of African Americans and will have expanded the limited research available related to skin color bias. While compensation will not be provided for participation in this study, you may find that you have gained a new perspective on past experiences and on the difficult topic of skin color bias within the African American community.

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

I welcome your questions and comments and can be contacted by email at cdaniels@email.smith.edu or by voicemail at (206) 333-0482. Please feel free to also contact me if you have any concerns about your rights or about any aspect of the study. You are also welcome to contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.

I hope you will decide to participate in this study.

BY SELECTING THE "I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE" OPTION BELOW, YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION ABOVE, THAT YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS, AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

☐ I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE

☐ I DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE

(Optional) If you have chosen not to participate, please briefly share why.

*** Please print a copy of this page for your records.

Appendix G

Demographic Data for Participants Who Addressed Skin Color Bias

The following demographic data are for the 93 participants who addressed skin color bias in either the early exposure to skin color bias essay question or in the protective socialization essay questions.

Table 8

Age Ranges of Participants

Age Ranges	*n*	%
18 – 24	2	2%
25 - 29	18	19%
30 - 39	21	23%
40 - 49	17	18%
50 - 59	20	22%
60 - 69	13	14%
70 - 79	1	1%
No answer	1	1%
Totals	93	100%

Table 9

Genders of Participants

Genders	*n*	%
Female	67	72%
Male	26	28%
Totals	93	100%

Table 10

Self-Perceived Skin Colors of Participants

Self-Perceived Skin Colors	*n*	%
Very Dark Brown	3	3%
Dark Brown	26	28%
Medium Brown	30	32%
Light Brown	21	23%
Very Light Brown	13	14%
Totals	93	100%

Table 11

U.S. Regions and Divisions in Which Participants Spent the Most Time Growing Up (from birth through age 18)

Regions	*n*	%	Divisions	*n*	%
Northeast	18	19%	New England	3	3%
			Middle Atlantic	15	16%
Midwest	11	12%	East North Central	10	11%
			West North Central	1	1%
South	60	65%	South Atlantic	38	41%
			East South Central	16	17%
			West South Central	6	6%
West	2	2%	Mountain	1	1%
			Pacific	1	1%
No answer	2	2%	No answer	2	2%
Totals	93	100%	Totals	93	100%

Note. Twenty-nine (29/31%) of the participants came from the District of Columbia or Maryland. These participants are included in the South region and in the South Atlantic division. See Appendix H for a list of states comprising each region and division (United States Census Bureau, n.d.)

Table 12

Predominant Socioeconomic Status of Participants While Growing Up (from birth through age 18)

Socioeconomic Statuses	*n*	%
Poor	10	11%
Working Class	41	44%
Middle Class	30	32%
Upper-Middle Class	8	9%
Upper Class	1	1%
No answer	3	3%
Totals	93	100%

Table 13

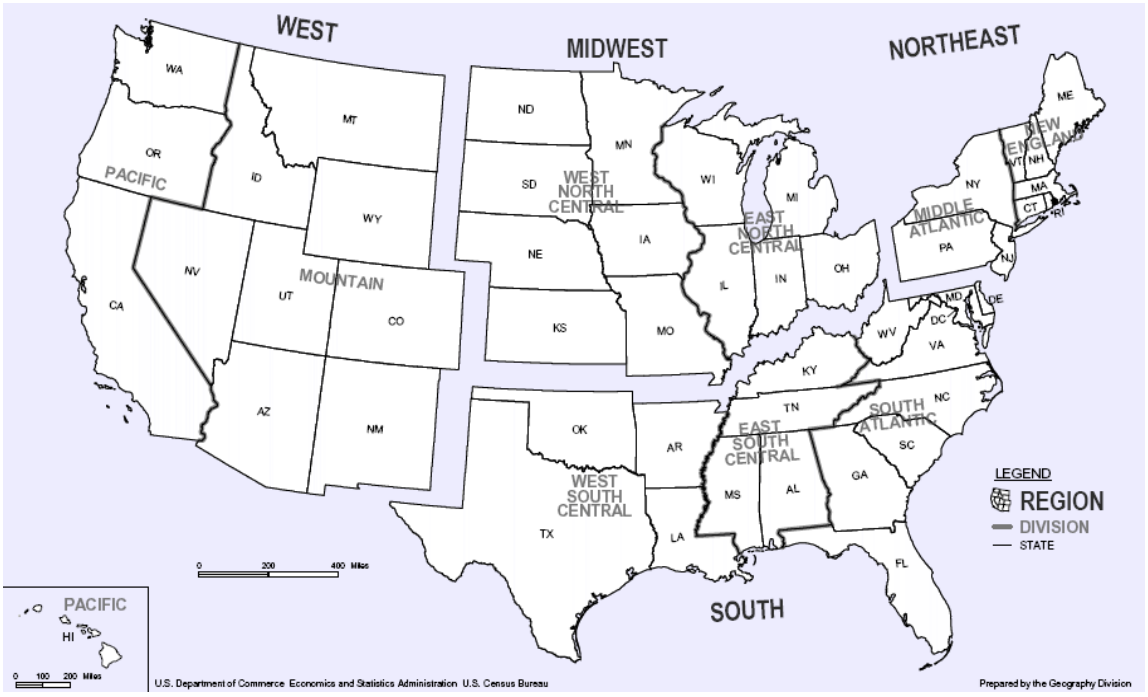
Highest Levels of Education Attained by Participants (at time of survey)

Education Levels Attained	*n*	%
High School	5	5%
Associate's Degree or Trade School	15	16%
Bachelor's Degree	24	26%
Master's Degree	40	43%
Doctoral Degree	9	10%
Totals	93	100%

Appendix H

United States Census Bureau Regions and Divisions

NORTHEAST	MIDWEST	SOUTH	WEST
<u>New England</u>	<u>East North Central</u>	<u>South Atlantic</u>	<u>Mountain</u>
Connecticut	Illinois	Delaware	Arizona
Maine	Indiana	District of Columbia	Colorado
Massachusetts	Michigan	Florida	Idaho
New Hampshire	Ohio	Georgia	Montana
Rhode Island	Wisconsin	Maryland	Nevada
Vermont		North Carolina	New Mexico
		South Carolina	Utah
		Virginia	Wyoming
		West Virginia	
<u>Middle Atlantic</u>	<u>West North Central</u>	<u>East South Central</u>	<u>Pacific</u>[a]
New Jersey	Iowa	Alabama	Alaska
New York	Kansas	Kentucky	California
Pennsylvania	Minnesota	Mississippi	Hawai'i
	Missouri	Tennessee	Oregon
	Nebraska		Washington
	North Dakota	<u>West South Central</u>	
	South Dakota	Arkansas	
		Louisiana	
		Oklahoma	
		Texas	



Note. Created with data retrieved on May 21, 2008, from the United States Census Bureau Web site: http://www.census.gov/geo/www/reg_div.txt

[a]Participants who spent most of their years from birth to age 18 in Alaska or Hawai'i were not included in this study.