

THE PAPER BAG TEST: DOES SKIN TONE AFFECT PERCEPTIONS OF
COMMUNICATOR STYLE WITHIN THE BLACK RACE?

by

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(Under the Direction of Jennifer L. Monahan)

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of skin tone bias within the Black race is as historic as slavery. The charge of this dissertation is to examine skin tone bias within the Black race. Prior research demonstrates that effects of skin tone bias within the African-American community are far-reaching – affecting life chances, perceptions of beauty, mate selection, self-efficacy, and self-esteem of Blacks (Hill, 2002). In this dissertation, I examine how skin tone bias affects judgments related to interpersonal communication.

The study design is a 2 (skin tone of target: light or dark) x 2 (gender of target) between subjects design. Participants (N = 372) from a historically Black university were asked to rate their perceptions of the communicator styles of one of the four target photographs (light-skinned or dark-skinned, male or female). Dependent measures were Verbal Aggressiveness Scale, Interpersonal Attraction Scale, and Communicator Competence Scale.

Participants viewed dark-skinned Black males more negatively than light-skinned Black males on 4 out of 6 of the measures. Participant's judgments of females were not significantly affected by the female's skin tone. Implications of the findings and areas for future research are offered.

INDEX WORDS: Skin tone, Blacks, Communicator Style, Verbal Aggression, Interpersonal Attraction, Communicator Competence, Colorism, Color Consciousness, Skin tone Bias, Media, Slavery, Race, HBCU, America, African American

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DEDICATION

To commitment, perseverance, and Faith.

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CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RATIONALE

“Skin color is a controversial topic in the African American community. At times, it has been openly discussed, and at other times, it has been unacknowledged and a taboo topic” – taboo being the idea that lighter-skinned Black people are viewed more favorably than darker-skinned Black people” (Wade, 1996, p. 358).

Introduction

The phenomenon of skin tone bias within the Black race is as historic as slavery.¹ The detrimental effects of slavery are, in fact, contributing forces behind this phenomenon. The differential treatment of light-skinned slaves (“house-niggers”) and dark-skinned slaves (“field-niggers”) by White slave-owners is perhaps the first documented example of skin tone bias in our society. The charge of this dissertation is to examine skin tone bias within the Black race – that is, the differential treatment we now impose on ourselves.

Research indicates that effects of skin tone bias within the African-American community are far-reaching – affecting life chances, perceptions of beauty, mate selection, self-efficacy, and self-esteem of Blacks (Hill, 2002). The magazine covers, the “attractive” movie star, the

¹ Being of Jamaican and British heritage, I believe the term ‘African American’ to be a culturally inaccurate description of me and many other people of color originating from African descent. Therefore I will use the term ‘Black’ most often to describe native people of African descent when speaking from my own voice, and will use the term ‘African American’ when citing others’ literature where that term is used.

“preferred” hair texture, the “fine” facial features, and the like both directly and indirectly indicate that light-skinned Blacks are seen as simply ‘better’ than dark-skinned Blacks. As a result of this historic bombardment of biased ideals of beauty and “goodness,” for the most part, light-skinned Blacks have found themselves ahead of the race – literally and figuratively. For example, light-skinned Blacks achieve more education (which promotes life chances), are perceived as being more physically attractive, appear to have more options for mate selection, and report higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Hill, 2002).

In this dissertation, I begin my discussion of skin tone bias by describing the cognitive mechanisms of stereotyping with a special emphasis on subtyping (Macrae et. al, 1995). Second, the literature describing the creation of and subsequent effects of skin tone bias on the African American community is reviewed. Third, hypotheses about the effect of skin tone bias within the Black community on perceptions of communicative style and ability, including Verbal Aggressiveness, Interpersonal Attraction, and Communicative Competence, are forwarded. Fourth, an experiment to test the hypotheses is described. Specifically, the dissertation examines Blacks’ perceptions of light-skinned and dark-skinned Black men and women’s communicative style. Chapter 1 lays out the theoretical rationale and hypotheses for this study, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the methods, Chapter 3 discusses results, and an overall discussion of this study is addressed in Chapter 4.

Stereotyping

In understanding any kind of bias we must first define the main culprit – stereotypes. Stereotypes are a type of fixed cognitive schema that leads to certain expectations of behavior from a particular group or member of that group (see, e.g., Fiske & Taylor, 1991). So we expect specific behavior differences, for example, when comparing “white-collar professionals” and

“blue-collar (or no-collar) workers”. While such expectations are derived from subjective observation and cultural teachings (including media, family, etc.), such stereotyping is often done automatically and without conscious thought (Bargh, 1997).

The second step in analyzing bias is to understand why stereotypes are employed. The widespread answer to this question is that cognitive schemata make life simpler. Stereotypes enable us to economically assess a person or situation. Macrae, Bodenhausen, & Milne (1995), note that “as capacity-limited processors in a world of overwhelming complexity, social perceivers are deemed to deploy a variety of simplifying cognitive strategies to increase the intelligibility of mental life” (p. 403). Stereotyping researchers believe social categorization is a general response to our limited cognitive capacity. Macrae et al. (1995) generally describe this process as follows: (1) the perceiver classifies the target individual in to his/her applicable social categories (e.g., artist, man, Hispanic); (2) category activation; (3) categories play a dominant role in shaping and interpreting subsequent information processing and target inferences.

One of the most common types of social categorization use to make sense of people is social role – both achieved and ascribed. Indeed, Fiske and Taylor (1991) present data demonstrating individuals are more likely to make inferences about others based on the social roles of that person than they are based on trait information about the person. There are generally two types of roles that result in stereotype activation. Achieved roles are those roles that are intentionally earned (i.e., athletic team member, actress, lawyer). For example, jocks are stupid is a stereotype associated with the athletic achieved role. More specific to the current research, ascribed roles are automatically acquired at birth (i.e., race, sex, and age). For example, the stereotype that women are less intelligent than men. Because role schemas are more often accessed to interpret the behavior of other, it is easier for most people to access or

activate a “Black person” stereotype than a “funny, sensitive” stereotype. While one might find it difficult to nail down a concrete idea of funny and sensitive (moreover find fifty people who would agree with what it means to be ‘funny’); a “Black man” comes with a host of easily accessible images and ideas that are widely associated with this ascribed role.

While it is not surprising that stereotype researchers focus on gender or race as the important ascribed roles for inference making, within the African American community one’s skin tone as lighter or darker is also a visually prominent physical feature that exists from birth. I suggest that “light-skinned Black” and “dark-skinned Black” are ascribed role schemas for African Americans – each with its own set of accessible, stereotypic characteristics.

The importance of pre-existing stereotypes is particularly important when one is forming an impression of a new person or when folding in new information into an existing schema. New information is often made to fit or work with the schema. When the information is inconsistent with a stereotype, it is often ignored, discarded, or is reinterpreted in such a way that the information becomes consistent with the stereotype. For example, the man who believes all Mexicans steal has his lost wallet returned to him at his house. How does he interpret this generous behavior? He locks his doors and windows in the belief that the Mexican returned the wallet so he would have a chance to get inside his home and scope it out for a robbery. Even when stereotype-inconsistent information is processed, it is significantly less likely to be recalled and or used to make judgments or inferences about a person, especially when it is inconsistent with a well-established stereotype, or we see the person as atypical, the exception to the rule or the one bad apple that spoils the bunch (Fiske & Taylor provide an extended review of this literature, see also, Hamilton, 1981).

Stereotypes: Both Automatic and Controlled

Stereotypes are often effortlessly and automatically deployed to understand the behavior of others (Spencer, Fein, Wolfe, Fong & Dunn, 1998; Wittenbrink, Judd & Park, 1997). After all, if they took effort, then they are less effective in the role of cognitive efficiency. Most theories, however, also recognize that stereotypes have both an automatic and a controlled part. For example, Fazio, Sanbonmatsu, Powell, and Kardes (1986) addressed the issue of automatic and controlled cognitive processes by positing that a strong, attitudinal association with an object is a sufficient push (whether conscious or subconscious) to automatically trigger stereotypical information (or attitudes) of that object. Fazio et al. (1986) agree with most theoretical models of stereotyping that the key feature of most stereotypes is that they are automatically activated and, thus, are inescapable (see Devine 1989 for a similar argument). The implication for attitudes is that, upon presentation of an attitude object, an individual's attitude would be activated despite the lack of any reflection whatsoever on his or her part. In contrast, controlled processes require the active attention of the individual (Bargh, 1997). For an automatic process to occur, the existence of a previously well-learned set of associations or responses must be in place. I suggest that the phenomenon of skin tone bias within the Black race encompasses a host of "well-learned" associations and responses that enable the automatic activation of specific attitudes (or stereotypes) for light skin and dark skin.

Devine articulates the process of stereotype activation in terms of the dissociation of automatic and controlled processes – "automatic" in that "...a target's group membership activates, or primes, the stereotype in the perceiver's memory, making other traits or attributes associated with the stereotype highly accessible for future processing, and "controlled" in the ability to "consciously monitor stereotype activation" (1989, p. 6). In essence, she states that

stereotype activation is not limited to those more prejudiced than others; rather, it is a schematic process in which more and less prejudiced people alike engage. The difference between the two is making the choice to engage in a controlled process following the automatic stereotype activation in order to combat the ‘desire’ to engage in prejudiced behavior (i.e., diminished or inappropriate conversation with another, inappropriate behavior interpretation of another).

In Study 1 Devine (1989) found both low- and high-prejudiced individuals are equally knowledgeable of cultural stereotypes and that these stereotypes are automatically activated when in the presence of a member of the target group. Additionally, low-prejudice responses were dependent upon the participant’s controlled inhibition of the automatically activated stereotype. In Study 2, when participants’ controlled response to an automatically activated stereotype was precluded, both high- and low-prejudice participants responded with evaluations that were stereotype-congruent when considering ambiguous behaviors. In Study 3, a consciously directed thought-listing task was used to examine the responses from high- and low-prejudice participants. As hypothesized, only low-prejudice participants consciously inhibited their automatically activated stereotypes. Devine states, “the implications of this automatic stereotype activation may be serious, particularly when the content of the stereotype is predominantly negative, as is the case with racial stereotypes” (Devine, 1989, p. 6). As will be reviewed below, the predominantly negative stereotype within the African American community is for the dark-skinned Blacks.

Stereotype Subtypes

While much of the research on stereotypes discuss categorization as divided into large sects such as Black and White, male and female, and homosexual and heterosexual, etc., not all cognitive biases exist on this broad level. Indeed, most theorists argue that people do not

typically make judgments based either on the most general or the most specific level (Fazio et al., 1986; Fiske & Taylor, 1991). For example, a general category is 'female' however, stereotyping can occur at the level of "professional woman" or "lesbian" or "homemaker." Similarly, Black is a general category yet Black people can be viewed in terms of "middle class" or "uneducated," or "light-skinned."

Research by Macrae and his colleagues specifically addresses the impact of subtyping on person perception. Macrae, Bodenhausen, and Milne (1995, p. 398) note that "People are perhaps the most complex stimuli we encounter, in part because they simultaneously belong to multiple social categories." According to subtyping theory, because many people are cognitive misers, they will be more likely to use a single dominant social category rather than contributing the additional effort required of a multiple-sourced approach to impression formation or person perception. It will be argued in this dissertation that skin tone is an added source of consideration when attempting, consciously or subconsciously, to form impressions of Black people. That is, within the Black community, light-skinned Black and dark-skinned Black become subtypes (or single dominant social categories) on their own, allowing the person perceiver to economize his/her mental effort when faced with a situation requiring such a cognitive schema.

Macrae et al., (1995, p. 403) acknowledge that "our impressions of others sometimes reflect an awareness (and influence) of more than one categorization cue." For example, a Black person's reaction to an elderly Black man may differ from her/his reaction to a Black male adolescent. Likewise, the reaction to a Black male adolescent or elderly Black man may very well differ from an initial reaction to a White, male adolescent. The notion behind these

differing responses is that the conjunctive nature of competing categories provides a different way of interpreting and digesting stereotypic cues.

The conjunction of social categories is what is paramount in cases such as these. Imagine a crime has been committed. Based on a well established social stereotype (albeit false) that Blacks are more criminal or deviant by nature, if one were to guess between two men found close to the scene of the crime (one White and one Black), many may assume the Black man had committed the crime. However, your assessment of the probable culprit might change should you find out that the White man is 19 and the Black man is 82. The conjunctive nature of stereotypic behaviors of the young and old, and Blacks and Whites would alter your “sensitivity.” With your new found knowledge in mind an 82 year-old Black man would hardly seem the type to commit a crime, according to your stereotypic beliefs about the behavior of society’s senior citizens in comparison to your stereotypic beliefs about adolescent/teenage behavior. Where race would have normally “buried” the 82 year-old, his age saved him; and where race would have normally saved the 19 year-old, his age “buried” him. In this situation, deciding between the two takes effort if one had to disentangle prevailing stereotypes about race and age. However, the conjunctive nature of the two categories makes the impression formation/behavioral attribution process easier.

This dissertation next will demonstrate the subtyping salience regarding skin tone within the Black race. That is, there are varying perceptions of attributes and behavioral interpretations/predictions for light-skinned Blacks when compared to dark-skinned Blacks. As noted earlier, those differences in perception usually fall positive for light-skinned Blacks and negative for dark-skinned Blacks. While interracial ideas about race and skin tone may be more hierarchical in nature, it is posited here that intra-racial ideas about race and skin tone within the

Black community is more unified in nature. While it can be argued that Whites see race first and foremost and then perhaps skin tone, the same cannot be argued regarding how Blacks see each other. Rather, it is argued that Blacks tend to see race and skin tone as collaborative.

Race is an obvious, and therefore easily accessible, physical feature on which social categories are based. Fiske & Taylor assert that subtypes and role schemas are easily cued by physical features because visual cues heavily navigate person perception. Additionally, “physical features are not only visually accessed but also they are present immediately in face-to-face interactions, providing schema-based expectations from the outset” (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 144). Within a certain context, the schema that is most likely to be cued is that which refers to the most distinguishing category. That is, in a situation involving Black people, skin tone has become a distinguishing characteristic. While there are certainly other characteristics that distinguish one Black person from another, skin tone is a salient issue and therefore becomes a tool for priming certain schema. Based on historical events, past and present media output, and research conducted on this phenomenon, one can argue that the light skin tool primes more positive schema (such as “educated” and “attractive”) when attempting to further categorize or individuate a Black person, while the dark skin tool primes the more negative schema (such as “uneducated” and “aggressive”) (Maddox & Gray, 2002). That is, it has been found that both Blacks and Whites utilize their assessment of skin tone in order to gain “greater understanding” of the person being perceived, as superficial or faulty as that “understanding” might be.

Accessibility of schemas is often based on how often and how recent the schema was used. If racial stereotypes are more easily accessible in one’s perception process, then that person is more likely to respond in racially biased ways as compared to someone whose perception process is not primarily driven by racial schemas. Given the importance of race in

this country, it is understandable that race is such a motivating factor in biased person perception. Further, given the racism that Blacks in America have endured because of this salience, it is not surprising that they too use skin color as a method of biased person perception.

The Sources of Skin Tone Bias

The conceptual definition of skin tone bias used in this dissertation is taken from Maddox and Gray (2002, p. 250) who state “Skin tone bias is the tendency to perceive or behave toward members of a racial category based on the lightness or darkness of their skin tone.” Maddox and Gray note that skin tone bias occurs in many countries and that light-skinned is typically valued, while dark-skinned is not. Skin tone bias has also been referred to as “color-consciousness” and “colorism” (Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, & Ward, 1987 in Maddox & Gray, 2002, p. 250) and those that engaged in this phenomenon were once called “color-struck” or having a “color complex” (Russell et al., 1992). According to Maddox and Gray, such terms “... reflect a psychological preoccupation with skin tone that has consequences for person perceivers and persons perceived (2002, p. 250).

To understand the effects of skin tone bias in today’s Black community in the United States requires that we begin with the historical roots of the bias – the construction of race, and inevitably, racism. Gates (1986) in his collection of essays, “‘Race’ Writing, and Difference” describes race as the “ultimate trope of difference.” In Higginbotham’s (1992) article, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” she describes Gates’s statement as specifically referring to race as “artificially and arbitrarily contrived to produce and maintain relations of power and subordination” (p. 253).

The conceptual definition of ‘race’ for this study comes from Higginbotham (1992) who blends the definitions of race from several theorists, particularly Du Bois and Gates, Jr. – stating

that “like gender and class, then, race must be seen as a social construction predicated upon the recognition of difference and signifying the simultaneous distinguishing and positioning of groups vis-à-vis one another” (p. 253). Higginbotham goes on to say that race is a “highly contested representation of relations of power between social categories by which individuals are identified and identify themselves” (p. 253). As noted earlier, skin tone is used as an additional grouping category for members of a race; a method, if you will, for further recognizing difference, signifying distinguishing characteristics, and representing relations of power.

According to Jones (2004), from a psychological perspective there are three distinct arguments as to why American settlers constructed race: “rational” construction stemming from self-interest; an accidental, “unthinking,” yet easily adopted, decision in the process of developing communities; and construction of race explained by deep psychological forces. In reference to the first argument, there are some who believe that the construction of race was nothing more than a pragmatic, albeit selfish, decision to justify, promote, and maintain the free labor of Africans. Rhett (2004) states that both Marxist scholars (such as Genovese, 1971) and non-Marxist scholars (such as Bennett, 1970 and Morgan, 1975) argue that “slave holders and their supporters created race as part of a deliberate plan to prevent poor whites, native peoples, and blacks from joining together against them” (p. 480). Regarding the second argument, Rhett states that on the other hand, some scholars believe that the construction of race was accidental; Jordan (1968), however, does concede that “the rapid and strong Anglo-American commitment to racism had its roots in long standing English ideas about, and fears of, blackness” (Rhett, 2004). Finally, regarding the third argument, Rhett argues that scholars such as Welsing (1972) believe that the explanation for the construction of racism rests “solely on psychological forces.” Psychological forces which include “a deep white disgust with blacks’ dark color; hidden

psychological motives; unconscious attempts to reconcile ego/super-ego demands” as well as a “need to bolster self by dominating the other” (Rhett, 2004).

As evidenced, skin tone bias (or colorism) stems from the times of slavery in the United States. To maintain the idea of White supremacy, white skin became the symbol for all that is good, while black skin became the symbol for all that is bad. According to Rhett, some scholars argue that “these ideas about color were deeply rooted in English culture so that it was easy for the colonists to adopt racism when confronted with Africans and with the manifest reality that enslaving Africans was in their economic interests” (Rhett, 2004, p. 480). Therefore, “in this racialized context, phenotype came to be the preeminent indicator of social standing and moral character: physical traits such as skin color, eye color, hair texture, nose shape, and lip prominence became powerfully loaded symbols of beauty, merit, and prestige” (Hill, 2002, p. 78). These distinctions seeped into the Black race, where light-skinned slaves (usually the children of white slave owners) were given certain advantages over dark-skinned slaves (Keith & Herring, 1991).

By the early 1900s, social organizations were routinely using skin tone as a method for measuring the intelligence and refinement of Black individuals – illustrating the internalization of Black loathing. The “paper bag test” was a common decision-making tool for negotiating the admittance of a Black person into clubs, social organizations, fraternities/sororities, churches, and the like (Maddox & Gray, 2002). The paper bag test was quite simple – the individual was compared to a brown paper bag, if they were darker than the bag, they were denied admission.

The 1960s and 1970s are often described as eras of increased Black pride (e.g., The Black Panther Movement, Civil Rights Movement). For example, during this timeframe, such phrases as “Black is beautiful” became prevalent. However, a cloud of colorism still traveled overhead:

Blacks experienced (and still experience) a desire to be at the top of the totem pole, any totem pole (Keith & Herring, 1991). Light-skinned Blacks could feel superior to dark-skinned Blacks. The effects of slavery and skin tone bias have created tools for both the conscious and subconscious destruction of the Black race – these tools are sometimes used to destroy oneself (i.e., the low self-esteem that dark-skinned Blacks experience) or to destroy another in order to falsely “build-up” oneself (i.e., light-skinned Blacks’ feelings of superiority over dark-skinned Blacks). Historical treatment of skin tone is ingrained in the fabric of this culture; the Black Power and Black Pride movements were simply not strong enough to eradicate the history from which race relations in the US were built – slavery.

Another source of skin tone bias is present in the media—current and past. Limited empirical research has supported the widespread popular claim that “...advertising, particularly in mainstream or non-Black media, reinforces complexion and feature discrimination by using models with light skin and Caucasian-like facial characteristics” (Keenan, 1996, p. 907). According to Keenan, while there was a short trend in the 1970s for darker-skinned Black models in the media; now it is typical that many models used in ads are lighter-skinned, and that Black, female models in particular tend to be lighter than Black, male models. Keenan found that lighter-skinned Black people are more often used in magazine ads than darker-skinned Black people, regardless of the magazine’s target population. Interestingly, when Black “beauty” products (hair relaxers, fade creams) were being advertised, darker-skinned models were used, where as general market products used lighter-skinned models (Keenan, 1996). Atkinson et al., (1996, p. 500) note “The bias against dark skin is a seldom verbalized but frequently exercised form of discrimination in contemporary American society.” Data from the National Survey of Black Americans showed that “the effects of skin tone are not only historical curiosities from a

legacy of slavery and racism, but present-day mechanisms that influence who gets what in America” (p. 500).

The Effects of Skin Tone Bias

The widespread idealization of light skin has led to several biased attitudes and behaviors; one result of this bias is value-laden terms used to organize and communicate variations in skin color/tone. “Brown racism,” resulting from the racism during European imperialism, is a term used by Mestizos (the racially mixed majority of Nicaragua), Chinese, Filipinos, and South Asians to denigrate those of African descent (Washington, 1990). Several correlation studies find that both Black and White individuals associate light skinned Blacks with positive traits and dark skin blacks with negative traits and attributes. These studies indicate that light-skinned Blacks are perceived as more socially accepted, smarter, more attractive, socially mobile, and emotionally stable (see e.g., Anderson & Cromwell, 1977; Bayton & Muldrow; 1968; Maddox & Gray, 2002; Marks, 1943).

Maddox and Gray (2002), for example, found participants used skin tone to organize their perceptions of Blacks. In this set of studies, both Black and White participants viewed a conversation and evaluated the participant (Study 1) or wrote down their beliefs about light and dark-skinned Blacks (Study 2). Results demonstrate a positive bias towards light skinned Blacks. For example, in Study 2, participants listed a greater number of negative traits for dark-skinned Blacks and a greater number of positive traits for light-skinned Blacks. The literature reviewed below demonstrates skin tone bias within the Black community directly affects life chances (i.e., educational and career opportunities), perceptions of beauty and mate selection, self-esteem and self-efficacy, as well as the social- and self- development of Black children.

Life chances. Several studies show that fair-skinned Blacks do better economically, vocationally, and educationally (Hill, 2002; Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Keith & Herring, 1991) that go back as far as the time of the Civil War. “Because of a stratification process that provided Blacks of mixed parentage with opportunities for training, education, the acquisition of property, and socialization into the dominant culture, mulattoes emerged at the top of the social hierarchy in Black communities following the civil war” (Frazier, 1957 in Keith & Herring, 1991, p. 763).

Keith and Herring (1991) ask the question – does skin tone continue to be related to stratification outcomes? The answer is “Yes,” and the following data (taken from the National Survey of Black Americans or NSBA) from their study support this answer. First, amount of educational attainment increased with lightening of skin tone. Lighter-skinned Blacks attain about 2 additional years of education when compared to dark-skinned Blacks. Second, light-skinned Blacks are much more likely to attain a professional occupation than dark-skinned Blacks, while dark-skinned Blacks are much more likely to be employed at the laborer level than light-skinned Blacks. Finally, Keith and Herring found both personal and family incomes are significantly higher for lighter-skinned Blacks than darker-skinned Blacks. Sadly, the authors note that these results mirror results found before the Civil Rights Movement.

Additional studies also show that lighter-skinned African Americans are more likely to have higher-status occupations, higher incomes, and more years of schooling than their darker-skinned counterparts, even when parental characteristics and other variables related to adult socioeconomic status are considered (see, e.g., Hill, 2002). After reviewing data from the National Survey of Black Americans, Celious and Oyserman (2001) found that light skinned Black people, in general, are more formally educated, have higher incomes, and higher socioeconomic status than darker-skinned Black people. Hughes and Hertel (1990) argue that

“...color stratification among African Americans stems from the persistence of a deeply embedded racial paradigm that perceives merit, character, and prestige through a distorting lens of color – that skin color is a diffuse status characteristic” (as cited in Hill, 2002, p. 77). Hill (2002) makes a convincing argument that both individual people and institutions give rewards and opportunities to African Americans in part as a function of how closely their appearance approximates Eurocentric standards. In support of Hill’s claim, Celious and Oyserman (2001) found that Blacks often assume that Whites prefer lighter-skinned Blacks, which might explain why light-skinned Black, college students reported higher aspirations than dark-skinned Black, college students – because their aspirations may indeed be more attainable.

Porter (1991) examined the effects of skin tone bias over a 40 year period (1940s to the 1980s) and found lighter-skinned Blacks were more likely to be employed, more socially mobile, and preferred as relational partners (both romantic and platonic). In addition, Porter (1991) sampled a group of Black school-aged children of Arizona and found children preferred honey brown and very light yellow skin tone and very dark brown and dark brown were the least preferred skin tones. There were age differences in Porter’s findings: 9 – 11 year-olds were primarily clustered in the category of ‘desire for sameness’ (e.g., “Her friends are that color”) and 12 – 13 year-olds provided reasons for skin tone preferences solely based on physical attraction (e.g., “people would talk to her more”). Porter (1991) suggests her results indicate that not much had changed between the 1940s and the early 1990s, when this study took place.

The developmental years. Averhart and Bigler (1997) state that there is little developmental work examining intra-racial prejudice with African American children. However, the few existing studies consistently report that African American children “attend to skin color

and show more positive attitudes toward lighter-complexioned than darker-complexioned individuals” (Averhart & Bigler, 1997, p. 365).

Averhart and Bigler (1997) found that Black, school-aged children were better able to recall the stereotypic behaviors of light-skinned (positive traits and high-status occupations) and dark-skinned (negative traits and low-status occupations) characters in the stories, as opposed to the counter-stereotypic behaviors. Also, when a child’s self selected skin tone differed from the experimenter’s perception of the child, all but one child rated his or her own skin tone as being lighter (rather than darker) than the skin tone the experimenter selected as representative of the child’s skin tone.

Attraction. “You don’t need any more sun” and “the darker the berry, the sweeter the juice” are phrases that indicate color conflict when it comes to physical attraction. Celious and Oyserman (2001, p. 159) note that “these competing messages about beauty as it is related to skin tone are widely acknowledged among many African Americans. The result is a heightened level of consciousness about one’s skin tone, the skin tone of others, and how it is valued differently dependent on the setting.”

Because attractiveness is related to self-worth, one argument is that those who are viewed as attractive feel better about themselves than those who are not seen as attractive. In a study conducted by Hall (1998) Black, college-student participants were asked to categorize their skin tone as well as to indicate what tone “pretty skin” is. Results indicated that light-skinned and dark-skinned participants associated skin tone with beauty; not surprisingly, light-skinned students rated themselves as more attractive than the dark-skinned students rated themselves.

Gender and attraction. The extant literature suggests that evaluations associated with skin tone bias differ for men and women when the judgments are concerned with attraction.

Specifically, the argument made by many scholars is that skin tone bias has more important implications within the African American community for women when it comes to dating and marital relationships. Porter (1991), for example, found a pronounced gender difference in her study of African American, school-aged children and skin tone: younger girls were twice as likely as boys to produce a sole affective component for dark-skinned Blacks (e.g., “He doesn’t like to be Black”). Celious & Oyserman (2001) found Black adult women were most affected by skin tone bias. In correlating class, gender, and skin tone, they found that darker-skinned women were associated with fewer years of education, less prestigious occupations, and lower family incomes.

Gender effects seem most pronounced when measuring mate selection (McAdoo, 1988; Ross, 1997). For example, in a study by Ebony Magazine (1980), 15% of African American females preferred light-skinned males whereas a full 30% of African American males preferred light-skinned females. Ross (1997) had Black, college students address their preference to date and to marry light-skinned persons. Findings indicated that dating and marrying light-skinned individuals differed as a function of gender. Males were more likely than females to prefer dating light-skinned persons as well as to marry light-skinned persons. Replicating McAdoo, Ross reports that 16.4% of the women and 33.3% of the men preferred to marry a person with light skin. Interestingly enough, the results indicated that the higher the minority percentage in the childhood neighborhood, the less important the preference for lighter skin. Thus, it appears that skin tone may be a significant stratifying agent for women in particular – partly due to Black male’s selection preference for light-skinned Black women (Keith & Herring, 1991).

Hill (2002) also argues that skin tone bias is more salient for African American women because desirable levels of femininity and beauty are closely related to whiteness. That is, the

more Eurocentric a Black woman appears to be, the more attractive and feminine she appears. Hill argues that this phenomenon, in part, stems from the days of slavery when light-skinned women were most often chosen as house slaves whereas dark-skinned women worked in the fields, side-by-side with Black men, therefore taking on the identity of masculinity. Ashe argues that historically “African Americans, with their traditionally African features, have always had an uneasy coexistence with the European (white) ideal of beauty” (1995, p. 579; see also Neal & Wilson, 1995).

Another factor affecting Black women's perceptions of beauty is that Black men are not held to the same standard as Black women – Black men can be (and often are) considered attractive regardless of their skin tone. The analyses of the perceptions of Black interviewers that interviewed Black Americans as part of the National Survey of Black Americans prove illuminating. In this study (Hill, 2002) interviewers were asked their perceptions of the respondents they interviewed including the respondent’s physical attractiveness and skin color. Results indicate that interviewers rated light-skinned, female respondents more positively than dark-skinned, female respondents. However, evaluations of physical attractiveness for male respondents were not significantly affected by skin tone. These findings suggest that Black women are held to a more stringent, biased standard than are Black men – by both Black men and Black women.

Wade (1996) suggests one reason that Black men are less affected by skin tone than are women is because Black men can augment how they are perceived by having a fair-skinned Black woman as their relational partner. His argument is that men are partly judged on the partners. Moreover, when collecting data from Black students and alumni of a college in the Northeast, he found dark-skinned Black men rated themselves higher on sexual attractiveness

measures than did light-skinned Black men. In contrast to the results reported by Hill, Keith and Herring, and by Ross for physical attractiveness, Wade found no significant differences regarding skin tone and self-perceptions of sexual attractiveness for female respondents. The author notes that this may be due to a possible belief among Black women that being of the Black race overrides issues of skin tone variation – meaning, because Black women have bore the brunt of skin tone bias (in addition to racism), they may feel that shade makes little difference at this point and therefore tend to rate their beauty regardless of issues of skin tone.

Gender, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. In a study of African American undergraduate and graduate students attending college in the Northeast, Coard, Brelan, and Raskin (2001) found that for dark-skinned male participants, the more satisfied they were with their skin color, the lower their self-esteem. This seemingly contradictory finding is explained in two ways by the authors: 1) “satisfaction” may be being incorrectly equated with “acceptance” – meaning, one can accept his/her skin tone, but not necessarily embrace it; and 2) one may be satisfied with his/her skin tone, but experience feelings of insecurity due to perceptions of how others view skin tone. In addition, Coard et al., (2001) report that more men than women indicated that opposite-gender peers and family prefer darker skin, whereas women indicated more often than men that same-gender peers prefer darker skin. Both men and women in this study had a preference for medium skin tone as opposed to light and dark. In general, they summarize their study by stating their findings provide further evidence that there is a preference for Black women to be of a lighter skin tone, and for Black men to be of a darker skin tone.

Thompson & Keith (2001) offer three reasons why there are gender differences related to skin tone in self-esteem within the Black community. One reason is that women are socialized to pay attention to others’ perceptions/appraisals of them, whereas men are not as socialized to

attend to the appraisals others have of them. The second reason is that colorism is not used against Black women in the same way it is used against Black men – Black men are viewed as more deviant the darker they are, but an attempt to overcome this bias (whether successful or not) may occur through the attainment of education. But for Black women, colorism is used as a measure of beauty – while men can attain further education in an attempt to combat skin tone bias, a woman can not successfully change her skin tone in order to be viewed as more attractive by others. The third reason is that Black women may not feel as in control of their life as Black men do due to gender, race, and skin tone bias.

According to Thompson & Keith (2001), self-esteem is affected by the way others treat you, and therefore how you feel about yourself. Because light-skinned Blacks are generally treated better in our society, it is not surprising that dark-skinned Blacks would have lower self-esteem in comparison to light-skinned Blacks. Further, self-efficacy would be lower for dark-skinned Blacks as well if they feel as though they have little control over certain aspects of their life (employment opportunity, social mobility) due to skin tone bias. Their results (from the NSBA) indicated that lighter-skinned Blacks had greater feelings of self-efficacy than darker-skinned Blacks (with this effect being stronger for men). In terms of self-esteem, they note that “women who are rated physically attractive have higher self-esteem scores, but attractiveness is at least partly related to skin tone” (Thompson & Keith, 2001, p. 2269). Social class was also a predictor: For lower class women, the lighter their skin tone, the higher their self esteem. The relationship between skin tone and self-esteem was similar for middle class women although the relationship was not as strong as it was for lower class women. Higher class women, regardless of skin tone, had high self-esteem as compared to lower and middle class women. Thus, Thompson and Keith suggest that gender (mediated by social economic status) socially

constructs the effect of skin tone on evaluations of self-esteem and self-efficacy. In summary, the literature suggests that skin tone may be important for Black males' feelings of self-efficacy and Black women's feelings of self-esteem – which matches traditional gender roles in our society – making feelings of masculinity and femininity partly dependent on skin tone.

Implications for Communication

The existence of two subtypes (light-skinned and dark skinned Black) has a historical basis beginning with slavery and continuing to the present. The literature review examined the skin tone phenomena through the lens of stereotype subtyping. Macrae et al., (1995) argue that individuals often use a single dominant social category rather than contributing the additional effort required of a multiple-sourced approach to impression formation or person perception. This dominant social category is comprised of attributes that work in conjunction with each other as a conservative attempt at impression formation. A variety of studies from sociology and psychology demonstrate that within the Black community skin tone is a common subtype with important implications for mate selection, education, and career opportunities. This dissertation extends prior research to examine African-Americans' perceptions of light-skinned and dark-skinned men and women's communicative style. I argue that there are at least three aspects of perceptions of communication behavior that are associated with skin tone: Verbal Aggressiveness, Interpersonal Attraction and Communication Competence.

Verbal Aggressiveness. Surprisingly, research on skin tone bias has not specifically examined perceptions of verbal aggression. Verbal aggressiveness is defined as “a personality trait that predisposes persons to attack the self-concepts of other people instead of, or in addition to, their positions” (Infante & Wigley, 1986, p. 61). Infante and Wigley's argument that verbal aggression is an attack on self-concept is consistent with other scholars in the verbal

aggressiveness literature (see, e. g., Rancer, Kosberg, & Silvestri, 1992). Verbal aggression can include verbal character and competence attacks, as well as nonverbal expressions of aggression such as “teasing, ridicule, profanity, character attacks, and insults” (Rubin et. al, 1994, p. 387).

While damage to self-concept and physical violence are important outcomes of verbal aggression, from the perspective of this dissertation, an equally important issue is the perception of the likelihood that an individual would be perceived as more or less verbally aggressive based solely on the individual’s skin tone. A common stereotype of Blacks, especially within the White community, is that of “the angry Black man” or the “the angry Black woman.” This label does not usually connote the image of a light-skinned male or female, rather the image of a more ‘uncontrolled’ dark-skinned individual is more readily accessible due to the pervasive, negative imagery of dark-skinned Blacks (Ross, 1997). As stated earlier, dark-skinned Blacks are perceived as less educated and more deviant than light-skinned Blacks (Hill, 2002; Wade, 1996), suggesting that people will be more likely to assume that a dark-skinned Black person will be more verbally aggressive and less likely to use prosocial interaction/communication strategies than a light-skinned Black person:

H1a: The dark-skinned individuals will be perceived as being more verbally aggressive than the light-skinned individuals.

H1b: The light-skinned individuals will be perceived as being more likely to use prosocial interaction/communication strategies than dark-skinned individuals.

Interpersonal Attraction. McCroskey and McCain (1974) suggest that interpersonal attraction includes perceptions of another individual as an attractive partner in carrying out positive social interactions (social attraction), appearing physically attractive (physical attraction), as well as accomplishing specific goals (task attraction). Interpersonal attraction is

positively associated with several important communication concepts, including interpersonal competence (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987), conversational involvement and immediacy (Burgoon & Hale, 1988), and cognitive complexity (Powers, Jordan, Gurley, & Lindstrom, 1986). In addition, Rocca and McCroskey (1999) found individuals perceived as attractive on the dimensions of physical, social and task attraction were also perceived as more credible and persuasive.

The halo effect (see Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Landy & Sigall, 1974; Thorndike, 1920) is expected to occur in the assessments of social, physical, and task attraction for the light-skinned individuals given the extensive literature pertaining to the more positive evaluations generally associated with light-skinned Blacks as compared to dark-skinned Blacks. That is, light skin serves as a halo that is accompanied by more positive associations about Blacks than dark skin does. Given the numerous amount of positive associations connected to those who are perceived as interpersonally attractive, an assessment of the degree to which light-skinned Blacks as compared to dark-skinned Blacks are viewed as socially, physically, and task attractive is a relevant area of research.

Social attraction has not been examined within the skin tone bias literature. This hole in the literature is not surprising given that most studies are from either a psychological or sociological perspective. I expect that light-skinned Blacks will be perceived as more socially attractive given that the literature demonstrates light-skinned Blacks are perceived as less deviant and as having higher levels of self-esteem than dark-skinned Blacks (see e.g., Wade, 1996). Low self-esteem and deviant behavior are two characteristics associated with dark-skinned blacks that would seem antithetical to promoting healthy relationships with others – thus, making one socially unattractive to another. Further, individuals tend to gravitate towards those people who

are perceived as physically attractive. Since light-skinned Blacks are more often perceived as physically attractive, have higher self esteem and are perceived as engaging in less deviant behavior, we can hypothesize that light-skinned Blacks will also be seen as more socially attractive:

H2: The light-skinned individuals will be perceived as more socially attractive than the dark-skinned individuals.

Physical attraction is a powerful tool in American society. Fiske & Taylor (1991) note that attractive individuals are perceived as encompassing more positive attributes such as sociability, intelligence, and employment success than unattractive individuals. Further research shows that there are several other traits that more attractive people have been rated more positively on than unattractive people; including integrity, potency, dominance, sexual warmth, and good mental health (see also Feingold, 1992). So when African-Americans "...adhere to a standard of attractiveness that argues 'if you're white you're all right; If you're yellow, you're mellow; If you're brown, stick around; But if you're black, get back!'" light skin becomes an important commodity in terms of assessing one's level of physical attraction (Freeman, Ross, Armor, & Pettigrew, 1966; Breland, 1998).

As noted, skin tone bias is particularly brutal for African American women as perceptions of their beauty are often based on the Eurocentric standard of beauty. Additionally, light-skinned Blacks, especially light-skinned women, are perceived as more physically attractive. While light-skinned Blacks in general are perceived more positively than dark-skinned Blacks, several studies have found that for judgments of physical attractiveness, skin tone bias has its strongest effect on judgments of women and often times has little to no effect on judgments made of the physical attractiveness of men (see, e.g., Hill, 2002). Thus, I predict a gender x skin tone bias

interaction effect where when judging a photograph of a Black person, skin tone bias will affect ratings of physical attractiveness of Black females but not of Black males:

H3a: The images of light-skinned individuals will be perceived as more physically attractive than the images of dark-skinned individuals.

H3b: The effect of perceptions of physical attraction as a function of skin tone will be stronger for females than for males.

Task attraction is another important factor in successfully navigating through life's opportunities. We rely on others on a day-to-day basis; therefore, the willingness of others to work with us (task attraction) is crucial to the success of most individuals. There is good reason to believe that light-skinned Blacks will be perceived as more task attractive than dark-skinned Blacks given that light-skinned Blacks are more likely to have higher-status occupations and more education than dark-skinned Blacks (Celious & Oyserman, 2001; Hill, 2002). Moreover, light-skinned Blacks are also often perceived as more intelligent and as having higher self-efficacy across several domains (see e.g., Hill 2002; Thompson & Keith, 2001). Intelligence, high self-efficacy, and better occupations are characteristics to consider when one must decide with whom to work, and with whom not to work:

H4: The light-skinned individuals will be perceived as more task attractive than the dark-skinned individuals.

Communicative Competence. Communication competence is a broad concept with a variety of definitions (see e.g., Parks, 1985 for a review). Spitzberg and Cupach define communication competence as “an individual's ability to adapt effectively to the surrounding environment over time” (1984, p. 35). Spitzberg (1983) also argues that communicative competence requires motivation, knowledge, and skill in order to be functionally effective.

Wiemann (1977) defines communication competence as “the ability of an interactant to choose among available communicative behaviors in order that he may successfully accomplish his own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of his fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation” (p. 195). A third perspective of communication competence defines it as “the ability to attain relevant interactive goals in specified social contexts using socially appropriate means and ways of speaking that result in positive outcomes with significant others” (Stohl, 1983, p. 688). Spitzberg argued that Wilson’s (1992) cognitive rules model and Berger’s (1989) work on conversational planning offer “complimentary insights about communication competence, i.e., that competent communicators possess an anticipatory mindset. In addition to being able to anticipate the implications of their actions (for both parties), and foresee any obstacle that might impede the achievement of their goal, competent communicators will adjust their goals in light of situational, relational, and/or cultural circumstances” (Spitzberg, 2003 as cited in Koesten, 2004, p. 230).

From these various interpretations of communicative competence, cognitive complexity seems to be an underlying theme. That is, the mental ability of an individual to accomplish communication goals, communicate effectively, adapt to different communication situations, as well as anticipate communication implications are important to being perceived as communicatively competent. Perceptions of the level of knowledge and ability to be functionally effective in a given communication situation are influenced by both the individual as well as society. Light-skinned Blacks are generally perceived as more socially accepted, smarter, more attractive, socially mobile, and emotionally stable (Maddox & Gray, 2002). The more positive perceptions of light-skinned Blacks than dark-skinned Blacks on the dimensions of

intelligence, physical attraction, and life chances for example, may factor into perceptions of how communicatively competent an individual is perceived to be.

My interest in communication competence stems from Breland's discussion of competence in skin tone in which he states that in which he states that "European Americans have adopted and perpetuated a standard that associates attractiveness with individual levels of competence [and that] African Americans have internalized this standard via socialization into the majority culture...as a result, a European standard is the primary mechanism used to measure attractiveness in both cultures. [Thus,] because lighter skinned African Americans' skin is closest to the European ideal, African Americans with lighter skin are perceived as more competent than their darker skinned peers" (1998, p. 295). The pervasive nature of Eurocentric ideals, therefore, results in cultural absorption:

H5: The light-skinned individuals will be perceived as more communicatively competent than the dark-skinned individuals.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Participants and Design

The original sample was comprised of 372 self-identified Black, college students who attend one of the historically Black institutions of the Atlanta University Center (Clark-Atlanta University, Morehouse College, and Spelman College). Human Subjects approval was attained through both The University of Georgia and Clark-Atlanta University (for the Atlanta University Center institutions). The vast majority of data collection was done on the campus of Clark-Atlanta University. Approximately 66% were female (245 women) and 34% were male (127 men). The average age was 20 years old ($m = 19.91$, $SD = 2.30$), with an age range of 18 to 37. While the vast majority of the participants were born and raised in the United States, approximately 4% (10 participants) of the sample were born in countries outside the US. There were thirty different majors represented in the sample, including Mass Communication, Math, Psychology, History, Finance, Theatre, etc.

In this study, Black college students rated their perceptions of the person in a photograph. There were two different photographs for each experimental condition – totaling eight photographs, four unaltered photos (2 male and 2 female) and four digitally darkened photos of the same four individuals. The design is a 2 (skin tone of person in photograph) x 2 (gender of person in photograph) x 2 (person 1 or 2) between subjects design.

Power. In prior work, Wade (1996) reported a d of .70 in examining perceptions of sexual attraction as a function of skin tone. Atkinson et al., (1996) reported an r of .71 for the effect of skin tone bias on client physical attractiveness and an r of .35 for skin tone bias on client potential for academic success. Thus, prior studies report moderate to large effect sizes. While these studies do not test the exact associations proposed in this study, they were reasonable surrogates for the purpose of power analysis. Guided by estimates provided by Cohen, for 372 participants, setting alpha at .05, and projecting moderate effect size ($d = .50$) for the tests of hypotheses, power is .90. Projecting for a smaller effect size ($d = .30$), with 372 participants, and setting alpha at .05, the power is .60.

Independent Variables

The two independent variables were skin tone of the person in the photo and gender of the person in the photo. A pilot study was conducted to select the photographs (two male and two female) that were used as target stimuli in the study. Digital photographs of eight individuals (four male and four female) were professionally digitally altered so that there was a light-skinned and dark-skinned version of each. Thirty-two pilot participants each viewed only one version of each photograph (thus seeing each person only once) and categorized the person in each photo as light-, medium-, or dark-skinned. The photographs that were categorized as light-skinned (from the light-skinned digital version) and dark-skinned (from the dark-skinned digital version) by at least 90% of the pilot sample were eligible for selection for the study. Thus, pilot testing ensured that there were two digital photos for each of the two male confederates and two digital photos for each of the two female confederates, such that each confederate had both a light- and dark-skinned version for inclusion in the main study.

Once the photographs were selected, color copies of the digital photographs of the target stimuli were used as material for the study. The photographs were limited to headshots of each confederate to avoid variation in dress and body type of the confederates. The facial expressions of the confederates were consistently neutral to avoid influencing the participant with a smile, frown, or some facial expression other than a neutral one. Permission was obtained from these four individuals to use their photos for data collection purposes; unfortunately, written permission was not obtained from these four individuals to use their photos in the publication of this dissertation. However, the photos are available from the author upon request.

To assess the efficacy of the manipulations, participants were asked, after turning in the survey portion of the study, to fill out some additional measures. Embedded in those measures were three questions that served as manipulation checks. This manipulation check asked the participant if they believed the person in the photograph was light-skinned (“like Halle Berry or Ice-T”) or dark-skinned (“like Angela Bassett or Wesley Snipes”). Participants were also asked to indicate the gender of the person in the photograph as well as to indicate the age range of the person in the photograph.

Measures

The critical dependent measures were Infante and Wigley’s (1986) Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (VAS), McCroskey and McCain’s (1974) Interpersonal Attraction Scale (IAS) to measure social, task, and physical attraction, and Wiemann’s (1977) Communicative Competence Scale (CCS).

Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (VAS). Verbal aggressiveness is conceptually defined as an individual difference that predisposes individuals to attack the self-concept of others (Infante & Wigley, 1986). The verbal aggressiveness scale (VAS) is a measure of verbal aggressiveness as

a personality trait. The scale was developed to test a model of skill deficiency that suggests that a lack of verbal skills necessary to argue constructively can lead to physical aggression. VAS was modified in this study in order for participants to apply the scale to their perceptions of the confederates. For example, the item “When I dislike individuals greatly, I try not to show it in what I say or how I say it” is revised to read “When this person dislikes an individual, he tries not to show it in what he says or how he says it.”

There are several validation studies for the VAS (e.g., Rudd, Vogl-Bauer, Dobos, Beatty, Valencic, 1998; Blickle, Habasch, & Senft, 1998; Infante & Wigley, 1986; Infante & Rancer, 1982) – all demonstrating that the VAS predicts verbal aggressiveness. For example, in the original research (Infante & Wigley, 1986), the authors correlated the VAS with ratings of six verbally aggressive messages and found the scale predicted message use. VAS had construct validity in terms of its relationship with assault, verbal hostility, and “unfriendly” compliance-gaining strategies and, in addition, the VAS was not related to argumentativeness (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Adaptations of the scale were also internally consistent: in a meta-analysis, Hamilton & Mineo (2001) report the average scale reliability is .84 with a 90% confidence interval of .79 - .90. Responses for VAS range from “almost never true” (1) to “almost always true” (5).

VAS is a 20-item scale, half of the items are worded aggressively or negatively and half of the items are worded benevolently or positively. An example of an aggressively worded item is “When individuals insult me, I get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off” whereas an example of a benevolently worded item is “I refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.” While the early research suggests the VAS is a one-dimensional scale, several published studies suggest that it may be comprised of two factors such that aggressively

worded items load on one factor and positively worded items load on a second factor (see e.g., Beatty et al., 1999). Levine, Beatty, Limon, Hamilton, Buck & Chory-Assad (2004) conducted two studies supporting the two-factor solution. They found that the first factor (e.g., aggressively worded items) appears to be the best measure of verbal aggressiveness as it is conceptualized by Infante, while the second factor (e.g., positively worded items) reflects “a communication style related to other-esteem confirmation and supportiveness” (Levine et al., 2004, p. 106). Levine et al., (2004) provide evidence suggesting that the aggressively/negatively and benevolently/positively worded items do not reflect opposite ends of the same continuum but rather assess two distinct constructs which serve to differentially predict the use of aggressive or prosocial communication strategies.

Levine et al., (2004) make two recommendations about using this scale. First, to score only the ten aggressively worded items and second, to assume a different conceptual model of verbal aggression that has two factors, such that one factor reflects selfish individualism and the second factor reflects prosocial cooperation. Similarly, Beatty et al., (1999) also argue that researchers should consider aggressive and benevolent tendencies as separate dimensions (as opposed to eliminating ten items or treating the scale as unidimensional) and thus score the two dimensions separately. In the present research, the entire 20-item scale will be used and the two-factor solution will be utilized.

Reliability for the adapted VAS in other studies yielded $\alpha = .79$ after deleting four items (Boster & Levine, 1988) and $\alpha = .81$ after rewording several items (Bayer & Cegala, 1992). The VAS was originally created as a self-report scale; in this study, it was modified to evaluate others' verbal aggressiveness. Therefore, the items in the scale were reworded to replace “I”

with “He/She.” Items 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, and 20 were reverse-coded before summing the 20 items and dividing by the number of items, per the authors of the scale.

Interpersonal Attraction Scale (IAS). Participants use McCroskey and McCain’s (1974) IAS to report their attraction toward another person. The IAS is a 15-item, three-factor scale measuring social, physical, and task attraction. The scale uses Likert items ranging from “strongly agree” (7) to “strongly disagree” (1); however, in order to maintain a sense of consistency for the participants, the item-ranging for this scale has been modified to reflect items ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5).

Social attraction is related to liking or a desire to socialize with someone. An example from the Social Attraction subscale is “I think he/she could be a friend of mine.” Rubin et al. (1994) note that IAS has been measured in a variety of contexts. Physical attraction refers to desire based on physical appearance and is illustrated by the following item from the scale: “He/she is very sexy looking.” The Task Attraction subscale refers to a desire to work with someone and is exemplified by the item: “If I wanted to get things done, I could probably depend on him.” Wheelless and Reichel (1990) reported that supervisor “versatility, assertiveness, and responsiveness” led to subordinates’ perceptions of supervisor’s task attractiveness.

McCroskey and McCain (1974) reported internal reliabilities for the scale as follows: Social Attraction, $\alpha = .84$, Task Attraction, $\alpha = .81$, and Physical Attraction, $\alpha = .86$, other researchers report similar reliabilities (see Rubin et. al, 1994). Split-half reliabilities for each subscale were reported as .90 for Social Attraction, .87 for Task Attraction, and .92 for Physical Attraction (McCroskey, Richmond, Daly, & Cox, 1975). Additionally, Wheelless, Frymier, & Thompson (1992), Duran & Kelly (1988), and Ayers (1989) have reported similar results.

As Rubin et al., (1994) note, there is ample evidence of construct validity for this scale and it has been extensively used in the field of communication. Notably, Canary & Spitzberg (1987) and Johnson (1992) reported a positive relationship between interpersonal attraction and interpersonal competence. Positive relationships were also found between interpersonal attraction and conversational involvement and immediacy (Burgoon & Hale, 1988), and cognitive complexity (Powers, Jordan, Gurley, & Lindstrom, 1986). Rocca and McCroskey (1999) note that perceptions of attraction were related to increased communication as well as interpersonal influence. The IAS was not modified in this study. Items 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 14, and 15 were reverse-coded before summing the 15 items and dividing by the number of items, per the authors of the scale.

Communicative Competence Scale (CCS). Participants use CCS to assess another person's communicative competence by responding to a 36-item Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Wiemann (1977) defines communicative competence as "an ability to choose among available communicative behaviors to accomplish one's own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face of fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation" (as cited by Rubin, 1994, p. 125). An example of a scale item for CCS is: "S can deal with others effectively." Items were modified in this study such that said item read "He/she can deal with others effectively."

The CCS has mixed results regarding its factor structure. The CCS was originally created to assess five dimensions of interpersonal competence – general competence, empathy, affiliation/support, behavioral flexibility, and social relaxation. While it was developed to assess five dimensions of interpersonal competence, Rubin (1994) notes that subsequent factor analyses suggest that two main factors – general competence and social relaxation—best represent the

data. On the other hand, Perotti and DeWine (1987) suggest that the CCS be used as a composite measure of communicative competence rather than breaking the scale into subscales. Spitzberg (1989) also suggests that the scale is best utilized as a composite measure.

Prior research using the CCS indicate that the scale is internally consistent with authors reporting an overall reliability for the scale as a composite measure ranging from α of .91 to .96 (see Rubin, 1994 for a review of the reliability of this scale). Specifically, reliability for CCS in a Weimann (1977) study reported $\alpha = .96$ and in a study by Jones & Brunner (1984), reliability reported $\alpha = .95$. Rubin also notes that several studies provide evidence that CCS predicts communication adaptability, interpersonal communication apprehension, open-mindedness, amount of and satisfaction with social support. The CCS was used as a composite measure in this study. Items 4, 8, 11, 12, and 28 were reverse-coded before summing the 36 items and dividing by the number of items, per the author of the scale.

Demographic Information. In the demographic section of the survey, participants indicated their gender, age, skin tone, type of college, and place of birth. As noted above in the literature review, participant's gender has been shown to affect judgments of skin tone bias on some measures (see Ross, 1997). Second, participants' self-perceptions of their skin tone may also affect their judgments of others. Therefore, participants used the same scale used in pilot testing (light-, medium-, or dark-skinned) to self-assess their skin tone. Regarding 'type of college,' participants self-selected into one of two categories: "I attend a Historically Black College or University (HBCU)" or "I attend a predominantly White college or university" – this measure was meant to serve as a quick assessment of their daily experiences (i.e., larger versus smaller social network of Blacks and/or variations in atmosphere of "racial pride").

Procedures

Recruitment of Participants. Although data collection at The University of Georgia was an option, the availability of Black college students was obviously greater at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) than at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI); therefore, all data collection was done at the Atlanta University Center (AUC), specifically on the campuses of Clark Atlanta University (CAU) and Morehouse College. Another reason for collecting data in this setting only is due to consideration of the potential differences that may exist in the interpretation of and identification with 'being Black' when comparing Black students who chose to attend an HBCU and Black students who chose to attend a PWI. These potentially strong differences between the students (based on choice of institution to attend) may have yielded results difficult to interpret when observing them as a whole. Additionally, finding previous research specifically related to skin tone bias and perceptions of communication conducted on the campus of an HBCU proved difficult – further strengthening the researcher's decision to collect data here.

Participants at Clark-Atlanta University and Morehouse College were recruited through faculty/departmental permission to visit classrooms. The types of classes that were surveyed include public speaking, political science, mass communication theory, psychology, theatre, research methods, interpersonal communication, international studies, and several others. Data collection took place over a period of several months, as permission to gain access to classrooms was not easily attained. The intimate nature of both CAU and Morehouse as it pertains to student enrollment at small, private institutions further impacted the availability of large numbers of participants in one, central location (a classroom, for instance) at a time. For some CAU and Morehouse students, extra credit was provided as compensation at the prerogative of the

professor. As mentioned, Human Subjects/IRB approval for the Atlanta University Center (CAU, Morehouse, and Spelman) and UGA were obtained.

Cover Story. To explain the purpose of the study, participants were told by the researcher that there was interest in “finding out what types of judgments are made about others based on just brief, first impressions...like those made on job interviews or the beginning of a blind date, on campus or at the mall.” Participants were told that people are often very accurate in their first impressions and that we were interested in how accurate their judgments were. Finally, they were told that as they were completing the survey they should rate the person in the photo based on their first impressions of them. There was no discussion of the race and/or skin tone of the photos.

Study Procedure. Participant surveys were run in classroom groups at CAU and Morehouse, with permission of the professors. Participants first read and signed two copies of a ‘consent to participate’ form, maintaining a copy for themselves and returning one to the researcher. After consent was achieved, the participants received a survey and one of the eight confederate photographs. Each participant was directed to consider the person in the photo while completing the survey – no reference to skin tone was made in order to elicit the least “produced” responses from the participants. The participants addressed their perceptions of the person in the photo by responding to the VAS scale, IAS scale, and CCS scale. The survey is shown in Appendix A.

Following the completion of the dependent measures, participants were asked to turn in that part of the survey (along with the photo) and were given the second part of the survey. In this second part of the survey were the manipulation checks. The purpose of asking the participants to turn in the first part of the survey, and the photo, was to elicit the participant’s

‘true’ memory of the person in the photo, rather than to elicit what may have been a more conscious, intentional decision about the confederate’s skin tone. Additionally, the participants were asked to assess the gender and age range of the person in the photograph.

Next, the participants’ general knowledge of skin tone-based stereotypes was assessed. Participants rated to what degree they thought society in general (not themselves) associates African Americans, both light-skinned and dark-skinned, men and women, with each of the following race-based/skin tone-based cultural stereotypes constructed by the author/researcher: angry, loud, poor, dumb, teenage parent, manipulative, criminal, intimidating, care-taker, manual laborer, government-dependent, inner-city resident, uneducated, sexually promiscuous, violent, overweight, lazy, bad parent, intimidated by authority, unhealthy, ugly, ignorant, aggressive. The choice was made to include these stereotypes in particular because they are commonly mediated portrayals of Blacks in America, and therefore ‘well-known’ due to constant exposure/reinforcement. As noted in the literature, light-skinned Blacks are more often used in mainstream ad campaigns (especially women), highlighting the more overall acceptance that light-skinned Blacks receive in American society. However, ‘well-known’ cultural stereotypes of Blacks in general tend to be negative – thus, the decision to include negative stereotypes, assessing the participants’ knowledge of America’s degree of association of these negative stereotypes with skin tone and perhaps skin tone x gender. It was made clear to the participants that they were not being asked about their own stereotypical beliefs that they may hold, but instead were being asked about what perceptions they believe society in general holds for individuals who look like this. Again, the purpose of this portion of the survey was to assess the level of participant knowledge of stereotypes relating to skin tone and perhaps stereotypes relating to skin tone x gender as well. Thus, participants completed the trait-like judgments for

all four possibilities: light-skinned male, light-skinned female, dark-skinned male, and dark-skinned female. Following the assessment of participants' knowledge of skin tone-based stereotypes, participants completed the demographic items (as mentioned earlier, participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, skin tone, type of college, and place of birth). Unfortunately, the items selected did not form internally consistent measures and, thus, will not be discussed in subsequent sections.

Finally, due to a degree of deception (withholding of information), participants received a debriefing statement explicating the purpose of the study (see informed consent and debriefing statement in Appendixes B and C, respectively). Participants were thanked and the researcher privately answered any questions the participants had. Participants were also encouraged to give the researcher their email addresses if they desired that an executive summary of the results be sent to them.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Although Infante and Wigley's (1986) originally constructed the Verbal Aggressiveness Scale as a unidimensional scale, as discussed earlier, Levine et al., (2004) and other more recently published articles using the VAS found it more apt to use VAS as a two-factor subscale where the aggressively/negatively worded items load on one subscale and are an assessment of the subject's tendency for verbal aggression and the benevolently/positively worded items load on the other subscale and are an assessment of the subject's tendency for prosocial interaction. Following Levine et al., (2004), the items of VAS were loaded into two subscales. The VAS appears to be internally consistent; the first dimension is Verbal Aggression (VA) $\alpha = .84$ and the second dimension is Prosocial Interaction or communication strategies (PI) $\alpha = .75$.

The Interpersonal Attraction Scale is a multidimensional construct, which suggests attraction is characterized by three dimensions – social, physical, and task attraction. Reliability for each of these dimensions is as follows: $\alpha = .59$ for Social Attraction (SA), $\alpha = .74$ for Physical Attraction (PA), and $\alpha = .74$ for Task Attraction (TA). Reliability is acceptable for the three attraction scales, with the exception of SA. Thus, the results for the SA scale should be interpreted with caution.

As mentioned previously, several studies provide evidence that the Communicative Competence Scale predicts communication adaptability, interpersonal communication apprehension, open-mindedness, amount of and satisfaction with social support. The CCS was

internally consistent; yielding $\alpha = .93$ for this 36-item revised version. Table 1 presents the correlation among the three dependent measures, indicating the need for multivariate analyses.

Manipulation Checks

The original, unaltered (light-skinned) photos of the four subjects were perceived as light-skinned by 100% of the participants, as shown in Table 2 above. Unfortunately, when these same photos were digitally altered to represent a dark-skinned version of the same subjects, there was less agreement among participants as to the skin tone of the person in the photograph. This issue was apparent early on in the data collection process; with the advice of her advisor, the researcher further darkened the photos of the dark-skinned version of the same subjects and over-sampled using these further darkened photos. Thus, the final sample included 140 participants exposed to a light-skinned photo and 232 participants who were exposed to an altered, darkened photo. Individuals who indicated they perceived the altered, darkened photos as representing a light-skinned person were eliminated from the original data set (see Table 2 below for the final sample used for the analyses). Although there was an original $N = 372$, the final data set was comprised of $N = 237$. Approximately 67% of the participants in the final data set were female (158 women) and 33% were male (79 men), the average age was 20 years old ($m = 20.05$, $SD = 2.28$).

A 2 (person) x 2 (skin tone) x 2 (gender) design was used to assess whether the two different photographs in each condition were viewed significantly differently. Results indicated that the two confederates within each condition were not evaluated significantly differently for each dependent measure. Therefore, because there were no interaction effects of 'person' with the gender and skin tone variables, the data was collapsed and the 'person' factor was not considered in testing the hypotheses – yielding a 2 x 2 between subjects design.

Table 1
Correlations among Dependent Measures

** indicates $p < .01$.

Note: VA = Verbal Aggression, PI = Prosocial Interaction, SA = Social Attraction,
PA = Physical Attraction, TA = Task Attraction, CCS = Communicative Competence Scale

	VA	PI	SA	PA	TA	CCS
VA	1.00					
PI	.07	1.00				
SA	-.17**	-.11	1.00			
PA	-.07	.05	.31**	1.00		
TA	-.21**	-.20**	.27**	.27**	1.00	
CCS	-.35**	-.16	.47**	.29**	.51**	1.00

Table 2

Final Number of Participants as a Function of Experimental Conditions

Note: As can be seen, the dark skinned female condition has the fewest number of participants, yet the number is sufficient for the proposed analyses.

	Light-skinned	Dark-skinned
Female	70	40
Male	70	57

Tests of Hypotheses

All dependent measures are examined with the 2 (gender of photo) x 2 (skin tone of photo) analysis of variance or multivariate analysis of variance as warranted. Post hoc comparisons of means were conducted with independent sample student t-tests ($p < .05$), comparing the relevant conditions.

Verbal Aggressiveness. H1a states that the dark-skinned individuals will be perceived as being more verbally aggressive than the light-skinned individuals. H1b states that the light-skinned individuals will be perceived as being more likely to use prosocial communication strategies than dark-skinned individuals. To test H1, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted using the two subscales of the Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (VAS) as the dependent measure. In interpreting the results for VAS, higher scores for the Verbal Aggressiveness (VA) subscale indicate an increased likelihood to use aggressive communication strategies, while lower scores on the Prosocial Interaction (PI) subscale indicate an increased likelihood to use prosocial communication strategies (higher scores on PI indicate an increased likelihood to use aggressive communication strategies).

The multivariate main effect for skin tone was not significant, Wilk's $\Lambda = .99$, *ns*. The multivariate main effect for gender was obtained, Wilk's $\Lambda = .94$, $F(2, 232) = 7.51$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. A multivariate interaction effect was also obtained, Wilk's $\Lambda = .96$, $F(2, 232) = 5.26$, $p = .006$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. In observing the univariate effects for the verbal aggression dimension of the VAS, the main effect for gender was significant $F(1, 233) = 14.48$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. The male targets ($m = 2.79$, $SD = .67$) were viewed as more verbally aggressive than the female targets ($m = 2.43$, $SD = .76$). Counter to H1, the main effect for skin tone was not significant $F(1, 233) = .02$, *ns*. In addition, there was a significant interaction effect $F(1,$

233) = 4.25, $p = .04$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. As shown in Table 3, the VA scores for the female targets do not significantly differ as a function of skin tone, however, the dark-skinned males are perceived as significantly more aggressive than the light-skinned males. H1a was supported only for male targets.

For the Prosocial Interaction dimension of the VAS, the main effect for gender was not significant $F(1, 233) = .16$, *ns*. Counter to H1b, the main effect for skin tone was not significant $F(1, 233) = 1.89$, *ns*. In addition, there was a significant interaction effect $F(1, 233) = 5.27$, $p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. As shown in Table 3, the PI scores for the female targets do not significantly differ as a function of skin tone, whereas participants rated the dark-skinned males significantly less likely than the light-skinned males to use these positive strategies. H1b was supported for male targets only.

Interpersonal Attraction. H2 states that the light-skinned individuals will be perceived as more socially attractive than the dark-skinned individuals. H3a states that the images of light-skinned individuals will be perceived as more physically attractive than the images of dark-skinned individuals, and H3b states that this effect will be stronger for females than for males. Finally, H4 states that the light-skinned individuals will be perceived as more task attractive than the dark-skinned individuals. To test Hypotheses 2 – 4, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted using the three subscales of the Interpersonal Attraction Scale as the dependent measures. The multivariate main effect for skin tone was not significant, Wilk's $\Lambda = .97$, *ns*. The multivariate main effect for gender was obtained, Wilk's $\Lambda = .96$, $F(2, 231) = 3.42$, $p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. The multivariate interaction effect was not significant, Wilk's $\Lambda = .98$, *ns*. The univariate effects are reported below.

For Social Attraction (H2), the main effects for skin tone, $F(1, 233) = .20$, *ns*, and gender, $F(1, 233) = .01$, *ns*, were not significant. In addition, the interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 233) = 1.05$, *ns*. Thus, H2 was not supported.

For Physical Attraction, the main effect for skin tone (H3a) was significant, $F(1, 233) = 4.04$, $p = .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. Light-skinned targets ($m = 3.23$, $SD = .61$) were viewed as more physically attractive than the dark-skinned targets ($m = 3.04$, $SD = .67$). The main effect for gender (H3b) was not significant, $F(1, 233) = .34$, *ns*. The main effect for skin tone was qualified by a gender x skin tone interaction, $F(1, 233) = 4.75$, $p = .03$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. As shown in Table 3, the light-skinned male was perceived as significantly more physically attractive than the dark-skinned male, whereas the light-skinned and dark-skinned females were not perceived as significantly different. Thus, H3a was supported for male targets only and results for H3b were opposite of the prediction.

For Task Attraction, both the main effect for skin tone $F(1, 233) = 1.87$, *ns* and the interaction effect $F(1, 233) = 1.81$, *ns* were not significant. The main effect for gender was significant, $F(1, 233) = 9.26$, $p = <.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. Female targets ($m = 3.81$, $SD = .59$) were perceived as more task attractive than were male targets ($m = 3.59$, $SD = .56$). Although there was a main effect for gender, H4 was not supported.

Communicative Competence. H5 states that the light-skinned individuals will be perceived as more communicatively competent than the dark-skinned individuals. To test H5, an analysis of variance was conducted. The main effects for skin tone $F(1, 233) = .13$, *ns*, gender, $F(1, 233) = .72$, *ns*, and the interaction effect $F(1, 233) = .18$, *ns* were all not significant. H5 was not supported.

Table 3
Dependent Measures as a Function of Target Skin Tone and Target Gender

Note: Shared asterisks within a dependent measure denote means that are significantly different ($p < .05$, student t -tests) as a function of target gender. Shared superscripts within a dependent measure denote means that are significantly different as a function of target skin tone.

Note: VA = Verbal Aggression, PI = Prosocial Interaction, SA = Social Attraction, PA = Physical Attraction, TA = Task Attraction, CCS = Communicative Competence Scale

	<u>Light-Skinned</u>		<u>Dark-Skinned</u>	
	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>
VA	2.53 (.80)	2.70 ^a (.67)	2.33* (.67)	2.88* ^a (.67)
PI	2.16 (.35)	2.25 ^a (.31)	2.20* (.46)	2.07* ^a (.35)
SA	3.67 (.53)	3.74 (.50)	3.78 (.61)	3.70 (.55)
PA	3.17 (.57)	3.30 ^a (.64)	3.18 (.64)	2.95 ^a (.68)
TA	3.81 (.59)	3.68 ^a (.55)	3.81* (.59)	3.48* ^a (.54)
CCS	3.40 (.44)	3.38 (.41)	3.41 (.49)	3.33 (.49)

Post Hoc Analyses

Rationale. Post hoc analyses were warranted due to results from previous research indicating significant self-esteem and self-efficacy effects as they relate to participant skin tone and participant gender. As noted in Chapter 1, the work of Coard, Brelan, and Raskin (2001) found that the more satisfied dark-skinned male participants were with their skin tone, the lower their self-esteem. These seemingly contradictory findings were explained by the authors in two ways: 1) “satisfaction” may be being incorrectly equated with “acceptance;” and 2) one may be satisfied with her/his skin tone, but still experience feelings of insecurity due to knowledge of how others tend to negatively perceive dark skin.

Further, as previously mentioned, Coard et al., (2001) reported that men more often than women indicated that opposite-gender peers and family prefer darker skin, whereas women more often than men indicated that same-gender peers prefer darker skin. To recall the research of Thompson & Keith (2001), the authors offer three reasons why there are gender differences as they relate to skin tone and self-esteem within the Black community: 1) women are socialized to pay attention to others’ perceptions/appraisals of them, whereas men are not as socialized to attend to the appraisals others have of them; 2) colorism is not used against Black women in the same way it is used against Black men – that is, for Black men an attempt to overcome this bias (whether successful or not) may occur through the attainment of education; but for Black women, colorism is used as a measure of beauty – that is, while men can attain further education in an attempt to combat skin tone bias, a woman can not successfully change her skin tone in order to be viewed as more attractive by others; and 3) Black women may not feel as in control of their life as Black men do due to gender, race, and skin tone bias.

Perhaps most apropos is an explanation offered by Thompson & Keith (2001) that lends itself directly to the rationale for conducting post hoc analyses for this study. Self-esteem is affected by the way others treat you, and therefore how you feel about yourself. As mentioned previously, Thompson & Keith (2001) state that because light-skinned Blacks are generally treated better in our society, it is not surprising that dark-skinned Blacks would have lower self-esteem in comparison to light-skinned Blacks, that self-efficacy would be lower for dark-skinned Blacks than light-skinned Blacks, and that women rated as physically attractive would have higher self-esteem, acknowledging that ratings of attraction are partly due to skin tone (where light skin is more often equated with the American standard of beauty for women).

For reasons articulated above, the self-reported participant skin tone (light-, medium-, or dark-skinned) and participant gender were examined as independent variables to explore possible interaction with the independent variable of confederate skin tone when examining the dependent measures. Although there was sufficient power to analyze the hypotheses, in post hoc analyses this would not be the case and power would be reduced if both participant skin tone and participant gender were analyzed within the same analysis. For example, as demonstrated in Table 2, the condition with the fewest number of participants was the dark skin/female photo condition ($N = 40$). To conduct a 3×2 (participant skin tone \times participant gender) between subjects analysis, the number of participants for the dark-skinned/female photo condition would drop to below 10. Therefore, I elected to examine for effects of participants' skin tone and participants' gender separately; examining the interaction effect of each with target skin tone and target gender.

It is important to note that of the variables participant skin tone and participant gender, only participant skin tone interacted with target skin tone; therefore, only the significant results

for this variable are reported in the text. For the interested reader, Appendix E details additional significant effects of participant skin tone or participant gender on the dependent measures when skin tone and gender of participant did not interact with target skin tone.

Task Attraction. The effect of participants' skin tone on their perceptions of task attraction was examined. A 3 (participants' skin tone) x 2 (target skin tone) x 2 (target gender) analysis of variance was conducted. There was a significant 3-way interaction between participant skin tone, target gender, and target skin tone, $F(2, 224) = 3.72, p = .03$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the means for the female target conditions were not significantly affected by participant's skin tone (student t , $p > .05$). For male targets, when the participant self-rated his/her skin tone as 'medium,' they rated the dark-skinned males as significantly less task attractive than the light-skinned males, no other results were significant.

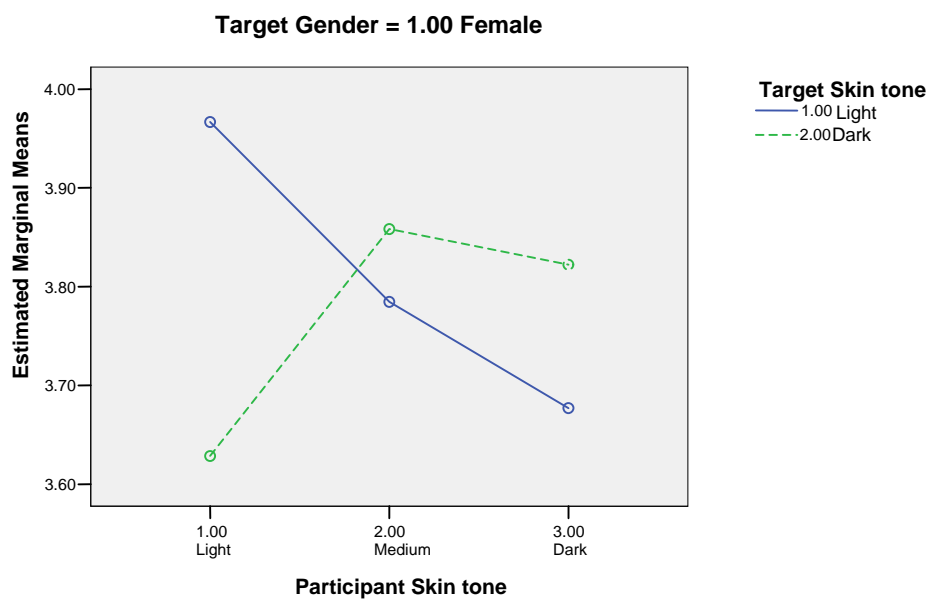


Figure 1
Estimated Marginal Means of Task Attraction

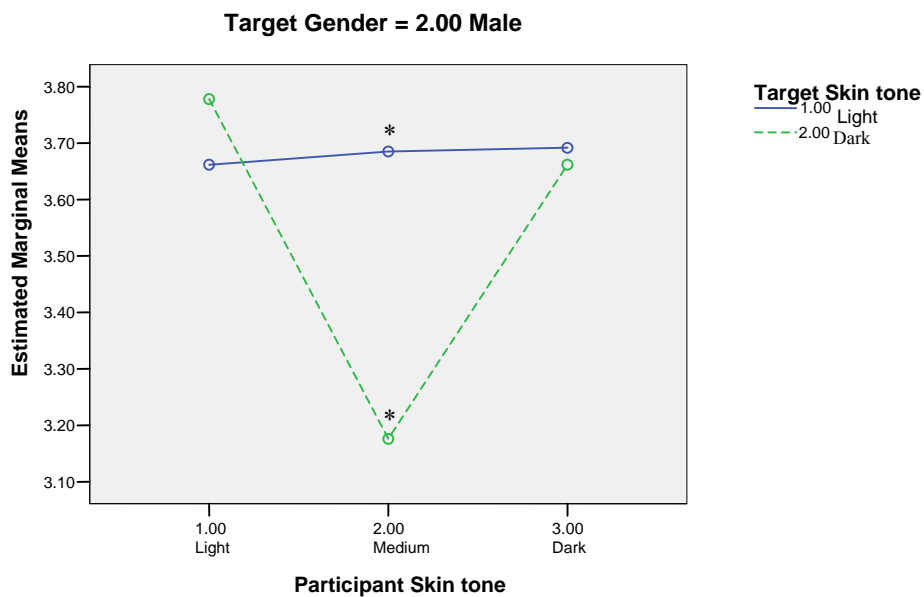


Figure 2
Estimated Marginal Means of Task Attraction

Note: * denotes means that are significantly different.

Communicative Competence. The same analysis was conducted with communicator competence as the dependent measure. There was a significant 3-way interaction effect between participant skin tone, target skin tone, and target gender, $F(2, 224) = 5.34, p = .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .05$. As shown in Figures 3, when the target is female and the target's skin tone is dark, as the participant's skin tone gets darker, the participant views the target as more communicatively competent. Ratings of the light-skinned female were flat across the participant skin tone conditions. As shown in Figure 4, when the male target is light-skinned, ratings of communicator competence are relatively flat. When rating the dark-skinned male targets, the only result was that participants who self-described their own skin tone as 'medium' rated the dark-skinned male as significantly less attractive.

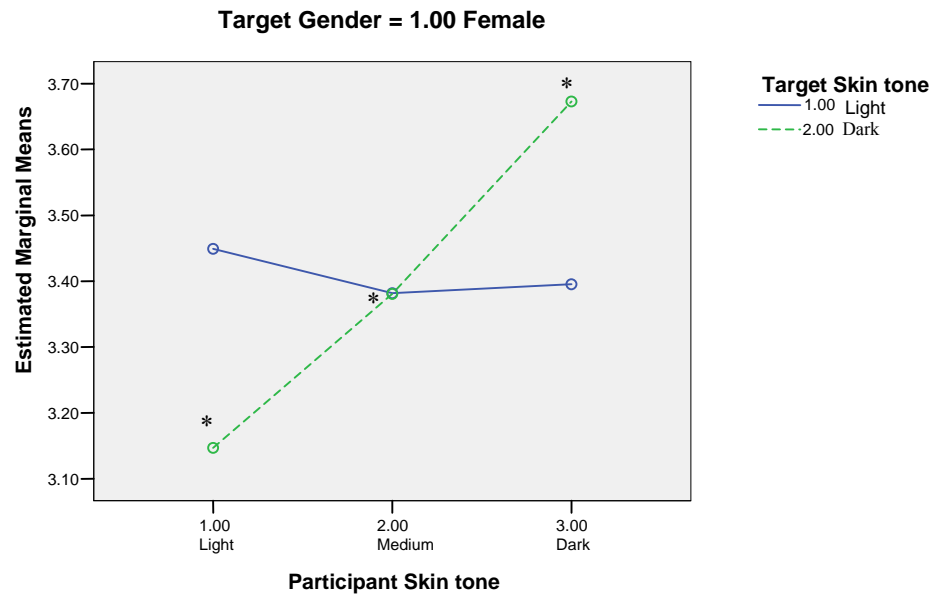


Figure 3
Estimated Marginal Means of Communicative Competence

Note: * denotes means that are significantly different (post hoc t-tests, $p < .05$).

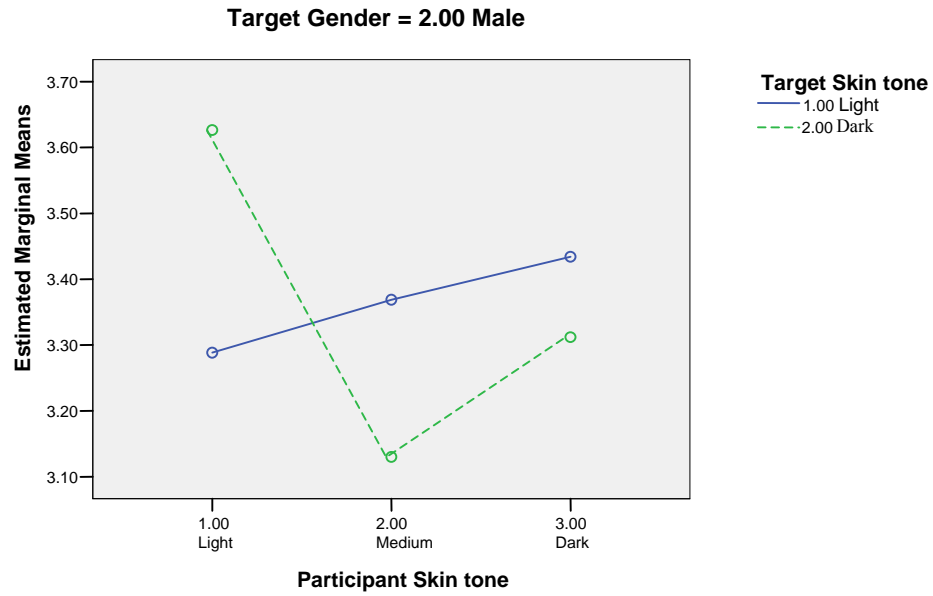


Figure 4
Estimated Marginal Means of Communicative Competence

Note: * denotes means that are significantly different, student t -tests ($p < .05$).

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to explore skin tone bias and its relationship to interpersonal communication. Specifically, does skin tone bias affect perceptions of communicator style within the Black race? A second purpose of this study was to explore whether skin tone and gender of the participant affected perceptions of communicator style. Overall, the findings suggest major differences in the ways in which skin tone bias may interact with gender. As expected, dark-skinned men, in particular, are more often the victim of skin tone bias when compared to light-skinned men. However, an unexpected finding was that participants did not perceive light-skinned and dark-skinned women as significantly different on any of the dependent measures. Since the results were quite distinct as a function of the gender of the person being evaluated, I first discuss the results for males followed by results for the females. Second, potential limitations are discussed and future studies are proposed to further this research program and to clarify findings from this dissertation.

Skin Tone Bias and Black Men

As hypothesized, participants perceived dark-skinned males as more verbally aggressive, less likely to use prosocial communication strategies, less physically attractive, and less task attractive than light-skinned males. These findings suggest that skin tone bias originating from slavery, as a result of the construction of race, (Bennett, 1970; Genovese, 1971; Morgan, 1975; Rhett, 2004) is still relevant today, at least for Black males. Prior work has indicated that the effects of skin tone bias within the Black community adversely affect the darker-skinned

individual's life chances (including professional success and educational attainment), mate selection, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Hill, 2002). The present findings confirm the on-going presence of this bias and, more over, extend prior work to demonstrate the significance of skin tone bias for perceptions of both verbal behavior (e.g., verbal aggressiveness and use of prosocial strategies) and interpersonal attraction (e.g., task and physical).

In addition, task attraction and communicator competency were the only variables that were significant in the post hoc tests that examined if participants' skin tone affected ratings of the dependent variables. In each case, it appeared that medium-skinned participants rated dark-skinned males as less task attractive and less communicatively competent than all other participants. One speculation for why light-skinned men were observed as more task attractive and communicatively competent than dark-skinned men may have to do with the sort of 'neutral' position that medium-skinned Black people hold (neither 'light-skinned' nor 'dark-skinned'). Medium-skinned participants may feel a certain sense of 'distance' from the effects of skin tone bias given their 'neutrality,' therefore more able to make distinct, measurable judgments about their perceptions of task attraction and communicator competence when responding to the person in the photo. This potential 'distance' from the effects of skin tone bias may partly explain why participants who identified themselves as medium-skinned were particularly harsh when making judgments of the dark-skinned male target. Perhaps it is easier for medium-skinned Blacks to accept (subconsciously perhaps) the stereotypes associated with light-skinned and dark-skinned Black people because 'their category' of skin tone is rarely discussed (or stereotyped); perhaps resulting in a group of Black people who are less sensitive to the effects of skin tone bias (on a personal level) and can therefore quickly make judgments of others without experiencing the personal 'sting' of skin tone bias.

The findings for the two verbal aggression measures for the Black males mirror the findings of previous studies on skin tone bias and perceptions of aggression in the media. It should not be surprising that dark-skinned males were perceived as the most verbally aggressive given the increased, mediated images of dark-skinned male characters as deviant, criminal, and violent (Keenan, 1996). The most notable example of these mediated stereotypes of Black men occurred during the O.J. Simpson trial. In an article in the *Denver Post* (Whye, July, 1994), Whye states that *Time* magazine allegedly attempted to make O.J. Simpson appear more sinister by artificially darkening his skin color on the cover photo of the magazine. Whye (1994) states, “this incident suggests the persistence of popular notions linking blackness to evil.” Society is bombarded with these types of stereotyped images (‘subtypes,’ to recall the work of Macrae et al. mentioned earlier); it is no wonder this stereotypical ‘information’ related to dark-skinned males will affect the way we perceive this segment of society. As mentioned in the review of literature, dark-skinned Black men bear the burden of being more often associated with criminality, deviance, and anger when compared to many other segments of society (Wade, 1996; Ross, 1997; Hill, 2002). Often this perception results in more negative interactions with the justice system, on the job, as well as within general day-to-day interactions.

Findings which indicated that participants perceived the dark-skinned Black males as less attractive than the light-skinned Black males are especially compelling when one recalls that participants in the light- and dark-skinned conditions viewed the same photograph – the only difference being the digitally darkened skin tone of that person in the photo. Thus, other than the skin tone, there was nothing different between the photos to trigger this more negative reaction.

One argument made in the literature is that judgments of physical attractiveness affect other more social judgments, thus creating a halo effect (Thorndike, 1920). It may be that

participants are overestimating the covariance between communicator appearance, traits, and behaviors by failing to discriminate between conceptually distinct judgments. The low correlations among the dependent variables, however, would suggest that the halo effect was not in operation. Future research might extend these findings to examine how dark- and light-skinned Black males are perceived in conversations. Rather than basing judgments on stereotypes or previous experience, participants would rate their perceptions of the communication style of a dark-skinned Black man after either engaging in a substantive conversation with him, or perhaps simply observing a conversation between two people in which one of the interactants is a dark-skinned Black man.

In summary, that for four of the six dependent measures darker-skinned Black males were rated more negatively by other Black people is strong evidence that skin tone bias is relevant in interpersonal interactions. That a cue as slight as the change of skin tone on a photograph leads participants to make more negative evaluations provides further support of the notion that dark-skinned Black men continue to face an uphill battle, even within their own community. This community bears the responsibility to change this battle by acknowledging their role within the functioning of this phenomenon.

Skin Tone Bias and Black Women

Surprisingly, participants did not rate the light-skinned and dark-skinned Black women differently on any of the dependent measures. There was only one finding; for dark-skinned female targets, the darker the participant's own skin tone, the more communicatively competent they rated the dark-skinned females. However, even in this one analysis with significant differences, the means for the light- and dark-skinned women did not differ within the participant skin tone condition. Since the lack of findings for women were completely unexpected as well

as contrary to prior literature, I am left to speculate as to why such effects were obtained for males but not for females.

First, perhaps the presentation of more ‘multidimensional’ roles for women as compared to men can serve as a possible explanation for the lack of results when comparing light- and dark-skinned women in this study. While historically our exposure to Black, female characters in television and film has been limited to the “mammy,” “jezebel,” “welfare queen” and the like (see Fuller, 2001; Clawson & Trice, 2000; Margolis, 1999), there is a positive addition to the realm of mediated images for Black women in America. For instance, Emerson (2002) notes that the steady rise of Black women as writers, performers, producers, and musicians within popular culture, specifically hip-hop culture, is promoting the ideal of Black women as “independent, strong, and self-reliant agents of their own desire, the masters of their own destiny.” The many different categories (both positive and negative) for Black women in society may be affecting the way Blacks ‘see’ Black women, thus the ‘diluted’ results as they pertain to skin tone differences among women yielded in this study. The increased sources of image/identity interpretation of Black women in general may be making it difficult for people to ‘hang their hat’ on any specific interpretation of either light-skinned or dark-skinned Black women. Unfortunately, while this explanation seemed promising, it is unlikely to explain the results of this study. If participants made more varied interpretations of the females, one would expect to see larger standard deviations associated with their judgments of females as compared to their judgments made of males. Instead, the standard deviations for all four skin tone by gender conditions are remarkably similar.

A second possible explanation may stem from a sense of social solidarity. That is, the female participants may have been expressing support when addressing their perceptions of the

female photos – as a way of asserting “we have enough to fight, let’s not fight each other.” King (1988) speaks of this tension when she writes about the ‘double jeopardy’ of Black women in America – the “interactive oppression” of being Black and female in America. As a result, Black women share a “distinctive context” that no other person experiences. Additionally, Collins (2000) discusses Black feminist standpoint epistemology and the importance of using “paradigms of intersectionality in interpreting social phenomenon” when studying Black women in America. This unique (at times unfortunate) standpoint shared by Black women certainly, greatly explains the functioning of certain social phenomenon within the Black, female community; however, once again, the results for this study confound this explanation. In post hoc analyses, no significant differences were obtained as a function of the participant’s gender. Thus, the findings indicated that male and female participants were not rating the female photos differently.

The strong foundation for ‘Black pride’ and identity development that is part of the mission of an HBCU is an important point to consider when interpreting the results of this study. Without doubt, Clark Atlanta University and the entire Atlanta University Center seek to uplift their students not only academically, but also culturally and socially. Although there were significant results that further supported the existence of skin tone bias for dark-skinned males, perhaps the cultural mission of an HBCU was evident in the confounding results for females, where ‘typical’ results along ‘color’ lines were not found. The effects of attending an HBCU on the participants’ perceptions is based on speculation since a comparison of the perceptions of this sample and the perceptions of Black participants on the campus of a PWI was not part of the methodology for this study. Therefore, the researcher urges caution when interpreting these results within the context of this possible explanation.

The findings for the light-skinned and dark-skinned women suggest a critical need for future research. One design that might help tease out some of the problems is a within subjects design. A within subjects design in which each participant rates both a light-skinned and a dark-skinned woman may allow the researcher to (a) confirm the present results and/or (b) see if a within-subjects analysis is more sensitive in picking up differences. Or, a study comparing perceptions across two different campuses (one historically Black and one predominantly White) might serve to bolster our confidence in the generalizability of these findings. Such a study would also provide a test as to whether the non-significant findings for the light-skinned and dark-skinned females were a function of the data being collected at an HBCU.

Social Attraction and Communicative Competence

The only two variables that yielded no main or interaction effects for target skin tone or target gender were judgments of social attraction (e.g., I think he/she could be a friend of mine) and communicator competence (e.g., He/she generally says the right thing at the right time). The lack of results for social attraction and communicator competence, may also have to do with the participants not having a ‘tangible’ basis for perceptions of the targets’ communication style. As a result of this limitation (no communication interaction on which to base judgments), it is not too surprising when looking at Table 3, that participants appeared to make these judgments quite close to the mid-point of the scale. Such a regression to the mean observed in these results indicates, perhaps, the participants’ lack of confidence in making specific judgments without having seen the target in action. In future work, allowing participants to engage in a conversation with or observe the conversation of a light-skinned or dark-skinned Black person might enable participants to better judge the target’s attractiveness as a social partner or employ competent communication strategies.

Limitations

As with all research study, this one has limitations. First, participants did not always view the original dark-skinned photographs as dark-skinned, even though the pilot manipulation check demonstrated that the light-skinned and dark-skinned versions of each photograph were viewed by participants appropriately (as 'light-skinned' and 'dark-skinned'). In the main study, while the 'light-skinned' photos were correctly identified as light-skinned by 100% of the participants, there was far less agreement when identifying the 'dark-skinned' male and female photos. Due to the lack of agreement, the dark-skinned photos were further darkened. In addition, participants' data were eliminated from the data set if the participant did not correctly identify the skin tone of the photo he or she viewed.

There are a few possible reasons why the pilot data and the experimental data for the dark-skinned photographs were not consistent. First, in the pilot test they rated the photo as they looked at the photo. In the main study, participants viewed the photo and completed the first portion survey. After returning that portion of the survey and the photo to the researcher, they then were asked to judge whether the person in the photo was 'light-skinned' or 'dark-skinned.' Hence, participants were rating their memory of the photo. Second, the pilot work occurred at a historically White campus, whereas the experimental work occurred at a historically Black campus. Because the HBCU participants come into direct daily contact with people who personify a greater degree of variation in skin tone, it is possible that what one defines as 'dark skin' in the context of a less varied environment, another may define as 'medium skin' in a context-rich environment.

A third reason why there was less agreement about the dark-skinned photos may be due to the facial features of the persons in the photos. The photos were taken of light-skinned Black

people, and light-skinned African Americans are more likely to exhibit more Eurocentric physical features than dark-skinned African Americans. Regarding skin tone and facial features, light-skinned Black people in America are often light-skinned as a result of ‘racial mixing’ between Blacks and Whites. This mixing can be a result of mulatto children born from White slave masters and Black slaves from generations ago or voluntary relationships between the races, as in more recent times (Keith & Herring, 1991). A result of this racial mixing is light-skinned Black people with less traditionally Afrocentric, and more traditionally Eurocentric, facial features. Regarding this study, because it was more effective to digitally darken the photos of light-skinned Black people, a few of the people in the photographs display the type of facial features more often characterized by light-skinned Black people, and less often by dark-skinned Black people. Therefore, a possible explanation for the lack of optimal agreement for these photos (and necessity for both further darkening the photos and over-sampling the dark-skinned photos) may be due to this perhaps ‘unsettling’ feeling or degree of skepticism that the participants may have experienced when observing a photo of a person with dark skin yet possessing the more traditionally Eurocentric facial features sometimes associated with a Black person with light skin. Or, perhaps the confounding nature of dark skin coupled with less traditionally Afrocentric facial features (as sometimes evidenced by light-skinned Black people) resulted in participants recalling the gestalt (e.g., facial features, hair color, and skin tone) when making this judgment.

Finally, although pilot participants perceived the photos as realistic and the total cost of professionally digitally altering and color duplicating the photos exceeded \$1,000, it is likely that top of the line digital alteration would have provided photos that were of even higher quality than those used for the study. Perhaps with a higher budget to allow for the creation of photos

that were of even higher quality, more agreement with regard to the identification of the dark-skinned photos as 'dark-skinned' may have occurred. That being said, I stand behind the decision to digitally alter the photos of light-skinned Black people, as opposed to using photos of naturally light-skinned Black people and photos of naturally dark-skinned Black people. Because of my decision, I am able to confidently attribute the appropriate significant differences along the dependent measures to skin tone alone; isolating this variable and thus enhancing the integrity of the results.

Although the lack of results for social attraction were discussed earlier, it is important to note here that another limitation to this study is the low reliability ($\alpha = .59$) of the social attraction variable.

Significance

The significance of this research is three-fold: (a) it highlights and further supports the precarious position of dark-skinned Black men in this country, (b) it introduces a discussion regarding the possibility of a changing ideal about the significance of skin tone as it relates to Black women specifically, and (c) it extends the limited body of work regarding this phenomenon and its relationship to interpersonal communication.

While speculation regarding positive self-identity as being one of the possible benefits of attending an HBCU was discussed above, it is disheartening that dark-skinned Black men were rated more negatively than light-skinned Black men across all measures. The significance here lies in the interpretation of these results in the context of a Black population who are attending a historically Black institution. The negative perception of Black men, especially dark-skinned Black men, by White society is, as was stated in the opening of this research, as "historic as slavery." However, perhaps even more disturbing is the adoption and internalization of these

perceptions by Blacks, as evidenced by the results in this study and others; hence, the significance of this body of research.

The lack of statistically significant results when comparing light-skinned and dark-skinned women may be interpreted as a slight wind of change; although this is clearly speculation until these findings are replicated. Stated with great caution, perhaps the fixed ideas within the Black community about Black women (and skin tone) are becoming less rigid. As briefly discussed earlier, the addition of Black women in varying roles in society in general, and popular culture in particular, may be positively affecting the interpretation, and reinterpretation, of what it ‘means’ to be a Black woman in America – including the ideals of skin tone. Replication of these findings using pictures of other Black women and in other contexts would help to further explore this idea.

Another important aspect of this dissertation is that little to no research examining the relationship between interpersonal communication perceptions and skin tone has been done prior to this dissertation. In previous skin tone research, the researchers primarily conducted work examining sociological level data or demographic data. Thus, there is still much more work to do before we can completely grasp the dynamics of this phenomenon we call skin tone bias, on an interpersonal level. Prior work has not addressed how skin tone bias operates in communicative settings, which is where this dissertation carves a place of its own.

Additionally, although previous studies on skin tone bias have used digital alteration of skin tone as a function of the experimental design (Maddox & Gray, 2002; Maddox & Chase, 2004), few existing studies exploring skin tone bias have utilized this experimental method; yet another defining characteristic of this study. While many other studies on skin tone bias rate perceptions based on general experience, this study asked the participant to respond to someone

in particular – the person in the photo. Further, while other studies have tested skin tone bias based on a naturally light-skinned person and/or a naturally dark-skinned person, this study isolated and manipulated only the skin tone of the target – allowing the significant differences yielded from the results to be confidently interpreted in terms of skin tone alone.

Further, aspects of the findings for verbal aggressiveness as it relates to skin tone bias reflect literature within the interpersonal communication discipline. Specifically, that men in general were perceived as more verbally aggressive than women in this study mirrors substantive research on gender differences and aggressiveness in other studies in the communication discipline (see Kinney, Smith, & Donzella, 2001; Bem, 1981). That a gender theme is observed between this study and more general studies on gender and aggressive communication styles is interesting. The gap between racial/ethnic differences in communication is, for a moment, bridged; as results which speak to the ways men and women communicate, versus Black and White, are observed in this study as well. That is, race and skin tone disappear in the context of this particular result for verbal aggression – yielding a main effect for gender. Regardless of race, our society encourages dominance, autonomy, and aggressiveness for the male gender, while it promotes caring and nurturing behaviors for the female gender (Kinney, Smith, Donzella, 2001).

Future Research

Several areas of future research have been proposed above; I touch on a few more examples below that can extend both the significance and impact of this study. As mentioned earlier, interesting results are likely to be yielded from a study on skin tone bias in which participants are able to interact with someone Black (light-skinned or dark-skinned) and then rate their perceptions of that person's communicator style. Or perhaps if participants were able to

observe a conversation between Black people (light-skinned or dark-skinned) and then rate their perceptions of communicator style. The researcher overheard a few comments (and received specific questions/concerns) from participants regarding their ability (or lack thereof) to rate the communicator style of someone based on a photo of that person. The inclusion of direct or indirect communication interaction in future research may solve this issue.

The phenomenon of skin tone bias and its relationship to interpersonal communication is likely a bi-directional relationship. While this study specifically focuses on how skin tone affects perceptions of communicator style, there is merit to focusing on how communication interaction can affect perceptions of skin tone. For example, if one's perception of a communication interaction is negative, when asked to recall the skin tone of the interactant, will a darker skin tone be recalled? Conversely, if one's perception of a communication interaction is positive, when asked to recall the skin tone of the interactant, will a lighter skin tone be recalled? An approach such as this begs the question, "to what degree does skin tone matter once you form a relationship with someone?" Perhaps after establishing a relationship with someone (whether positive or negative) the person's skin tone is not an important factor in the subsequent judgments made about that person.

The study of how members of differing races consider and 'practice' skin tone bias is also an interesting perspective for future research. While skin tone is a preoccupation of many within the Black race, it exists as such due to the initial preoccupation with skin tone of the White race, both on a general, racial level, as well as on the more nuanced level of skin tone bias (see e.g., Anderson & Cromwell, 1977; Bayton & Muldrow; 1968; Maddox & Gray, 2002; Marks, 1943). Further, in this country, Whites hold both economic and social power; therefore, how skin tone is interpreted and used by this group of society must be explored, for the benefit of

those who do not, at this time, hold equal economic and social power. It is faulty to assume that skin tone bias is a 'dark' secret of the Black race; although first used in this country against the Black race, it was not created within the race, and therefore its use can never be assumed to be restricted to the race.

A substantial amount of literature exists regarding the relationship between advertising and skin tone bias. Future research focusing on the relationship between the amount of media consumed as it relates to perceptions of others based on skin tone would be beneficial. An exploration of how media exposure and knowledge of stereotyped images of Blacks in movies and television (on the dimension of skin tone) is affecting perceptions of communicator style may enhance our understanding of some of the communication behaviors of low, moderate, and high media consumers.

Although raised in this country from the age of three, I hold extremely strong ties to my international heritage. For that reason, exploring the functions of skin tone bias outside the borders of the US is a focus for future research. Further, as mentioned in the review of literature, skin tone bias is not limited to the United States. South and Central America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa all share the shame of this phenomenon (Washington, 1990).

Conclusion

The results of this study supported previous research on skin tone bias as it pertains to males, these findings serve to extend this research and enhance understanding of this phenomenon. The findings for judgments of women in this study were contrary to the findings of previous research; however, these findings were informative as well, inspiring further exploration of the phenomenon. Studying Black individuals' perceptions of other Blacks calls attention to the ways skin tone bias is used within the race. As was mentioned in the theoretical

rationale, decreased self-esteem, self-efficacy, marital options, educational attainment, and professional success have all been identified as byproducts and consequences of skin tone bias in the United States of America (see e.g., Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Keith & Herring, 1991, Porter, 1991; Celious & Oyserman, 2001; Hill, 2002). That the greatest victims of this bias are actively engaging in its use is the impetus for this study. I hope that the results yielded here, in addition to the results yielded in similar research, serve to awaken this community to the role it plays in perpetuating this cycle of ‘one step forward, two steps back.’

As mentioned, specific strengths of this study include holding ‘face’ or ‘person’ constant by digitally altering skin tone (varying skin tone only), rather than using a different ‘face’ or ‘person’ to represent either ‘light-skinned’ or ‘dark-skinned’. Further, using two people for each condition added generalizability to the results of this study. These strengths in methodology were not observed in most studies of this phenomenon. Additionally, that this study tested skin tone bias in a very individual, particular way by using photos of people as the basis for judgment rather than asking participants to “think of skin tone in general” when responding to the survey is yet another strength.

This work contributes to the overall exploration and understanding of interpersonal communication more broadly than just in its contributions to skin tone. As mentioned previously, results for verbal aggressiveness in particular serve to further demonstrate the relationship between gender and communication behavior. While the effects of racial/ethnic differences on communication behavior have been established, results from this study reaffirm the notion of a common thread which runs through human communication behavior.

I hope the overall sense of the work will encourage us to question not only the behavior of others, but also our own behavior. Specifically, this work was meant to further the attempts

made by many within the Black race (whether through formal research or informal discussion) to call attention to how Blacks in America are approaching and engaging each other. While I do not argue the devastating, far-reaching effects of slavery on the spirit and sensibility of Blacks living in America, I do encourage all of us to be more determined and mindful of the ways in which we communicate with each other, despite our history in this country. As researchers have demonstrated, even Black children are assuming the negative, stereotypical attitudes and perceptions of themselves and each other based on the examples we are setting (Averhart & Bigler, 1997). At some point a change must be made to turn the tide for future generations – this work is a small contribution to that change. All research should serve to awaken curiosity and challenge apathy – I am confident that this work has accomplished that aim.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

We would like you to give us your gut or automatic judgments of the person in the photo based solely on your gut or automatic reactions to the photo. Some people find it very difficult to evaluate a person based solely on a photograph. However, research shows that many people are surprisingly accurate. Even though the task might be difficult for you, please try your best while answering each item.

First tell us how the person in the photo probably *tries to get people to comply with his/her wishes* using the following scale:

1 = Almost never true 2 = Rarely true 3 = Occasionally true 4 = Often true 5 = Almost always true

	Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True
<i>Based on what I see in his/her photo:</i>					
1. He/she would be extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals' intelligence when he/she attacks their ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When individuals are very stubborn, he/she would insult the other person to soften their stubbornness.	1	2	3	4	5
3. He/she would try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when he/she tries to influence them.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When people refuse to do a task he/she knows is important, without good reason, he/she would tell them they are unreasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When others do things that he/she regards as stupid, he/she would try to be extremely gentle with them.	1	2	3	4	5
6. If individuals he/she is trying to influence really deserve it, he/she would attack their character.	1	2	3	4	5
7. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, he/she would insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
8. He/she would try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance, he/she would lose his/her temper and say rather strong things to them.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When people criticize his/her shortcomings, he/she would take it in good humor and not try to get back at them.	1	2	3	4	5

	Almost Never True	Rarely True	Occasionally True	Often True	Almost Always True
Based on what I see in his/her photo:					
11. When individuals insult him/her, he/she would get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.	1	2	3	4	5
12. When he/she dislikes individuals greatly, he/she would try not to show it in what he/she says or how he/she says it.	1	2	3	4	5
13. He/she would like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When he/she attacks people's ideas, he/she would try not to damage their self-concepts.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When he/she tries to influence people, he/she would make a great effort not to offend them.	1	2	3	4	5
16. When people do things which are mean and cruel, he/she would attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
17. He/she would refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.	1	2	3	4	5
18. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, he/she would yell and scream in order to get some movement from the other person.	1	2	3	4	5
19. When he/she is not able to refute others' positions, he/she would try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.	1	2	3	4	5
20. When an argument shifts to personal attacks, he/she would try very hard to change the subject.	1	2	3	4	5

Now, please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to the person in the photo using the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Undecided	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Undecided	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Based on what I see in his/her photo:					
1. I think he/she could be a friend of mine.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It would be difficult to meet and talk with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
3. He/she just wouldn't fit into my circle of friends.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We could never establish a personal friendship with each other.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I would like to have a friendly chat with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I think he/she is quite handsome/pretty.	1	2	3	4	5
7. He/she is very sexy looking.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I find him/her very attractive physically.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I don't like the way he/she looks.	1	2	3	4	5
10. He/she is somewhat ugly.	1	2	3	4	5
11. He/she would be a typical goof-off when assigned a job to do.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have confidence in his/her ability to get the job done.	1	2	3	4	5
13. If I wanted to get things done, I could probably depend on him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I couldn't get anything accomplished with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
15. He/she would be a poor problem solver.	1	2	3	4	5

Complete the following items with the person in the photo in mind using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided/ Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided/ Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Based on what I see in his/her photo:					
1. He/she finds it easy to get along with others.	1	2	3	4	5
2. He/she can adapt to changing situations.	1	2	3	4	5
3. He/she treats people as individuals.	1	2	3	4	5
4. He/she interrupts others too much.	1	2	3	4	5
5. He/she is "rewarding" to talk to.	1	2	3	4	5
6. He/she can deal with other effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
7. He/she is a good listener.	1	2	3	4	5
8. His/her personal relations are cold and distant.	1	2	3	4	5
9. He/she is easy to talk to.	1	2	3	4	5
10. He/she won't argue with someone just to prove he/she is right.	1	2	3	4	5
11. His/her conversation behavior is not "smooth."	1	2	3	4	5
12. He/she ignores other people's feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
13. He/she generally knows how others feel.	1	2	3	4	5
14. He/she lets others know he/she understands them.	1	2	3	4	5
15. He/she understands other people.	1	2	3	4	5
16. He/she is relaxed and comfortable when speaking.	1	2	3	4	5
17. He/she listens to what other people say to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
18. He/she likes to be close and personal with people.	1	2	3	4	5
19. He/she generally knows what type of behavior is appropriate in any given situation.	1	2	3	4	5
20. He/she does not make unusual demands on his/her friends.	1	2	3	4	5
21. He/she is an effective conversationalist.	1	2	3	4	5
22. He/she is supportive of others.	1	2	3	4	5
23. He/she does not mind meeting strangers.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided/ Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Based on what I see in his/her photo:					
24. He/she can easily put himself/herself in another person's shoes.	1	2	3	4	5
25. He/she pays attention to the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5
26. He/she is generally relaxed when conversing with a new acquaintance.	1	2	3	4	5
27. He/she is interested in what others have to say.	1	2	3	4	5
28. He/she doesn't follow the conversation very well.	1	2	3	4	5
29. He/she enjoys social gatherings where he/she can meet new people.	1	2	3	4	5
30. He/she is a likeable person.	1	2	3	4	5
31. He/she is flexible.	1	2	3	4	5
32. He/she is not afraid to speak with people in authority.	1	2	3	4	5
33. People can go to him/her with their problems.	1	2	3	4	5
34. He/she generally says the right thing at the right time.	1	2	3	4	5
35. He/she likes to use his/her voice and body expressively.	1	2	3	4	5
36. He/she is sensitive to others' needs of the moment.	1	2	3	4	5

Please turn in this portion of the Survey now. After you turn this portion in, you may begin the final part.

We would now like to have your descriptive evaluation of the photograph you just saw.

1. The person was _____ Female _____ Male

2. The person was probably in this age range (*check one below*)

10-17

18-35

36-55

55 or older

3. In my opinion, the person's skin tone was:

_____ Light-skinned (like Halle Berry or Ice-T)

_____ Dark-skinned (like Missy Elliot or Wesley Snipes)

We know that certain stereotypes are pervasive in our society. Even though you *personally* do not hold a given stereotype, we would like to see what stereotypes you think that society *in general* holds for African Americans. REMEMBER: You personally don't have to hold these stereotypes, we want to know what you think *others believe*.

First make sure you know what group we are referring to when we ask these questions. We will ask about stereotypes associated with African American men, where we'll ask about "dark-skinned" Black men and "light-skinned" Black men.

We will also ask about stereotypes associated with African American women, where we'll ask about "dark-skinned" Black women and "light-skinned" Black women.

People associate a **dark-skinned black woman** with being ...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Loud	1	2	3	4	5
Poor	1	2	3	4	5
Dumb	1	2	3	4	5
A teenage parent	1	2	3	4	5
Manipulative	1	2	3	4	5
Criminal	1	2	3	4	5
Intimidating	1	2	3	4	5
A manual laborer	1	2	3	4	5
Government-dependent	1	2	3	4	5
An Inner-city resident	1	2	3	4	5
Uneducated	1	2	3	4	5
Sexy	1	2	3	4	5
Violent	1	2	3	4	5
Overweight	1	2	3	4	5
Lazy	1	2	3	4	5
A bad parent	1	2	3	4	5
Intimidated by authority	1	2	3	4	5
Unhealthy	1	2	3	4	5
Ugly	1	2	3	4	5
Ignorant	1	2	3	4	5
Aggressive	1	2	3	4	5

People associate a **light-skinned black man** with being ...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Loud	1	2	3	4	5
Poor	1	2	3	4	5
Dumb	1	2	3	4	5
A teenage parent	1	2	3	4	5
Manipulative	1	2	3	4	5
Criminal	1	2	3	4	5
Intimidating	1	2	3	4	5
A manual laborer	1	2	3	4	5
Government-dependent	1	2	3	4	5
An Inner-city resident	1	2	3	4	5
Uneducated	1	2	3	4	5
Sexy	1	2	3	4	5
Violent	1	2	3	4	5
Overweight	1	2	3	4	5
Lazy	1	2	3	4	5
A bad parent	1	2	3	4	5
Intimidated by authority	1	2	3	4	5
Unhealthy	1	2	3	4	5
Ugly	1	2	3	4	5
Ignorant	1	2	3	4	5
Aggressive	1	2	3	4	5

People associate a **light-skinned black woman** with being ...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Loud	1	2	3	4	5
Poor	1	2	3	4	5
Dumb	1	2	3	4	5
A teenage parent	1	2	3	4	5
Manipulative	1	2	3	4	5
Criminal	1	2	3	4	5
Intimidating	1	2	3	4	5
A manual laborer	1	2	3	4	5
Government-dependent	1	2	3	4	5
An Inner-city resident	1	2	3	4	5
Uneducated	1	2	3	4	5
Sexy	1	2	3	4	5
Violent	1	2	3	4	5
Overweight	1	2	3	4	5
Lazy	1	2	3	4	5
A bad parent	1	2	3	4	5
Intimidated by authority	1	2	3	4	5
Unhealthy	1	2	3	4	5
Ugly	1	2	3	4	5
Ignorant	1	2	3	4	5
Aggressive	1	2	3	4	5

People associate a **dark-skinned black man** with being...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Angry	1	2	3	4	5
Loud	1	2	3	4	5
Poor	1	2	3	4	5
Dumb	1	2	3	4	5
A teenage parent	1	2	3	4	5
Manipulative	1	2	3	4	5
Criminal	1	2	3	4	5
Intimidating	1	2	3	4	5
A manual laborer	1	2	3	4	5
Government-dependent	1	2	3	4	5
An Inner-city resident	1	2	3	4	5
Uneducated	1	2	3	4	5
Sexy	1	2	3	4	5
Violent	1	2	3	4	5
Overweight	1	2	3	4	5
Lazy	1	2	3	4	5
A bad parent	1	2	3	4	5
Intimidated by authority	1	2	3	4	5
Unhealthy	1	2	3	4	5
Ugly	1	2	3	4	5
Ignorant	1	2	3	4	5
Aggressive	1	2	3	4	5

Finally, we'd like you to answer some questions about yourself.

1. I am Female Male
(circle)

2. My Age is _____

3. My major is _____ (indicate 'undecided' if that is true)

4. How would you describe your skin tone: Light Medium Dark
(please circle one)

5. Type of college/university you attend: _____ Historically Black College or University (HBCU)
(please check one)

_____ Predominantly White College or University

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM (Clark Atlanta University)

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "Perceptions of Communicator Style" conducted by Keisha Edwards Tassie, Researcher from the Department of Speech Communication and Theatre Arts (KSLE1@uga.edu). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to examine the types of first impressions we tend to form of others.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following:

Fill out a survey that asks me about my first impressions of a person in a photograph.

The expected duration of participation in this research is 20 to 25 minutes.

No risk and/or discomforts are expected.

Expected benefits to me and/or others as a result of my participation in this research include added knowledge of the formation of first impressions to the body of work surrounding interpersonal communication.

The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form, unless otherwise required by law. The surveys themselves will have no identifiable information – I will not be asked to put my name on the survey. The surveys and consent forms will be kept in a secured location by the researcher.

In order to make this study a valid one, some information about my participation will be withheld until after the study.

The researcher will answer any further questions or accept any comments about the research now or during the course of the project (KSLE1@uga.edu).

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Keisha Edwards Tassie, M.A.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Email: KSLE1@uga.edu

Carole Mitchell-Leon, Dept. Chair

Name of CAU Faculty Advisor

Signature

Date

Email: cmleon@cau.edu

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu. You may also address your concerns to the Institutional Review Board of Clark Atlanta University (404.880.6979 or 404.880.6829).

Appendix C

CONSENT FORM (University of Georgia)

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "FIRST IMPRESSIONS" conducted by Keisha S. Edwards, Researcher from the Department of Speech Communication (706-542-4893) under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Monahan, Department of Speech Communication, University of Georgia (706-542-3257). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to examine the types of first impressions we tend to make of others.

If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- 1) Fill out a survey that asks you about your first impressions of a person in a photograph.

The expected duration of participation in this research is 20 to 25 minutes.

You will receive course credit for filling out this survey. Even if you decide to stop taking part in this research, you will still receive the course credit.

No risk and/or discomforts are expected.

Expected benefits to you and/or others as a result of your participation in this research include added knowledge of the formation of first impressions to the body of work surrounding interpersonal communication.

The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form, unless otherwise required by law. The surveys themselves will have no identifiable information – you will not be asked to put your name on the survey. The surveys and consent forms will be kept in a secured location by the researcher.

In order to make this study a valid one, some information about your participation will be withheld until after the study.

The researcher will answer any further questions or accept any comments about the research now or during the course of the project (706-542-4893).

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Keisha S. Edwards, M.A.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Telephone: **706-542-4893** Email: **KSLE1@uga.edu**

Jennifer Monahan, Ph.D.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Telephone: **706-542-3257** Email: **jmonahan@uga.edu**

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

Appendix D

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Thank you for helping out today. There are several studies that find our first impressions of someone can have significant effects on whether we like them, whether we would hire them for a job, and whether we would want to talk with them. The purpose of the study you participated in today was to extend the research on first impressions.

Each person who helped out with our study was shown a photo of a person and was asked to give us their first impression of that person using various scales. As stated in your consent form, in order for this study to be a valid one a degree of deception was involved. As we told you, our interest in this study was first impressions people form of others. What we did not tell you, however, was that we were also interested in how skin tone affects the first impressions you form of other people.

There are studies that show that skin tone does affect the way we perceive some people. Often times, light-skinned Blacks are perceived in a generally more positive light than dark-skinned Blacks. These perceptions have real effects on the way we communicate with each other, as well as perceptions of beauty, perceptions of intelligence, mate selection, educational attainment, and so forth.

In this study, you were randomly assigned to rate a photograph of a man or a woman. Some of you rated a photo of a light-skinned man. Others of you saw the *same man* but the photo was digitally altered to make the man appear as if he had darker skin. Similarly, some of you rated a photograph of a light-skinned woman. Others of you saw the *same woman* but the photo was digitally altered to make the woman appear as if she had darker skin.

We were interested in whether Black participants would view the light-skinned version of the person as a person who was more attractive, more competent, and less prone to verbal aggressiveness. We were also interested in gender differences: are *dark-skinned men* more attractive, whereas *light-skinned women* are more attractive?

We are sorry that we could not reveal the true purpose of the study prior to your completion of the survey. If we had told you we were also interested in how skin tone affects your ratings, you may have been hyper-aware of skin tone and that may have influenced your responses. Instead, we hoped to elicit your unbiased responses in order to more accurately measure this phenomenon.

If you have any questions regarding this study or if you would like an executive summary of this research study, please feel free to contact Keisha S. Edwards, M.A. at 706-542-4893 (E-mail KSLE1@uga.edu) or Jennifer Monahan, Ph.D. at 706-542-3257 (E-mail jmonahan@uga.edu).

Appendix E

Additional Post Hoc Results

Post hoc analyses examined the influence of participant skin tone and participant gender on the dependent measures. Any interactions with target skin tone are found in the results section. This Appendix reports any significant main or interaction effects of these two variables on the dependent measures that do not interact with target skin tone. After a presentation of the significant results obtained, a brief discussion follows.

Verbal Aggressiveness. The effect of participants' skin tone on their perceptions of verbal aggression as it related to the confederate photos was examined. A 3 (participants' skin tone) x 2 (target skin tone) x 2 (target gender) analysis of variance was conducted. There was a significant 2-way interaction effect for participant skin tone and target gender, $F(2, 224) = 4.23$, $p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. As shown in Figure 5 of this Appendix, medium-skinned participants viewed the male target ($m = 2.94$, $SD = .64$) as more verbally aggressive than the female target ($m = 2.40$, $SD = .72$).

The effect of participants' gender on their perceptions of verbal aggression as it related to the confederate photos was examined. A 2 (participants' gender) x 2 (target skin tone) x 2 (target gender) analysis of variance was conducted. There was a significant main effect for participant gender, $F(1, 229) = 5.83$, $p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. Male participants ($m = 2.79$, $SD = .78$) viewed the confederates as more verbally aggressive than did the female participants ($m = 2.54$, $SD = .69$).

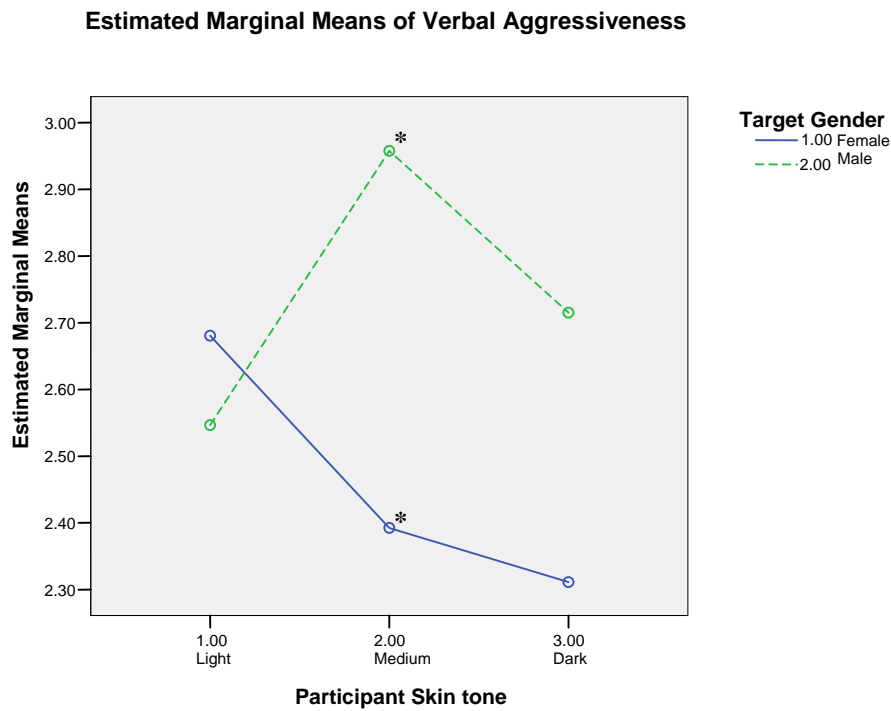


Figure 5
Estimated Marginal Means of Verbal Aggressiveness

Social Attraction. The effect of participants' skin tone on their perceptions of social attraction as it related to the confederate photos was examined. A 3 (participants' skin tone) x 2 (target skin tone) x 2 (target gender) analysis of variance was conducted. There was a significant 2-way interaction between participants' skin tone and target gender, $F(2, 224) = 4.96$, $p = .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. As shown in Figure 6 of this Appendix, light-skinned participants perceived the male target ($m = 3.79$, $SD = .48$) to be more socially attractive than the female target ($m = 3.49$, $SD = .47$).

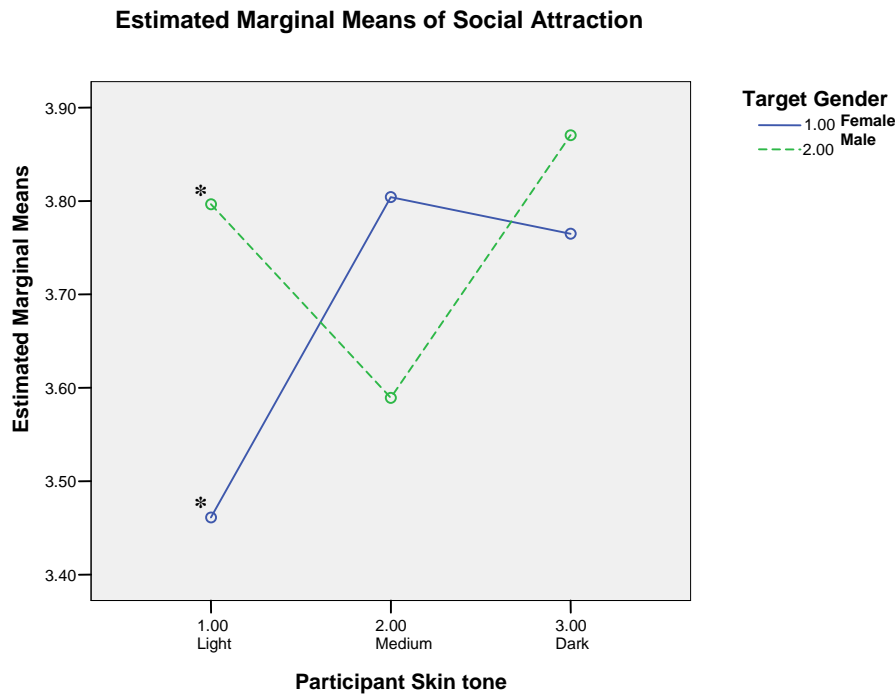


Figure 6
Estimated Marginal Means of Social Attraction

Physical Attraction. The effect of participants' gender on their perceptions of physical attraction as it related to the confederate photos was examined. A 2 (participants' gender) x 2 (target skin tone) x 2 (target gender) analysis of variance was conducted. There was a significant main effect for participant gender, $F(1, 229) = 5.10, p = .03, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$. Female participants ($m = 3.21, SD = .65$) viewed the confederate photos as more attractive than did male participants ($m = 3.01, SD = .59$).

Discussion of Additional Post Hoc Results

Verbal Aggressiveness. Regarding the finding that medium-skinned participants rated the male targets as more verbally aggressive than the female targets, per the discussion in the text, perhaps medium-skinned Black people, due to their 'neutral' skin tone (neither light-

skinned nor dark-skinned) exhibit more of an ‘acceptance’ of the stereotypes associated with the aggression level of Black males. They may experience a kind of ‘distance’ from the stereotypes associated with light skin and dark skin and therefore may be accepting the stereotypes to a greater degree because of their ‘distance.’

Regarding the main effect for participant gender, it is not surprising that the male participants rated the confederates as more verbally aggressive than did the female participants, considering gender socialization with regard to aggression, as addressed in the discussion section of the text. Perhaps some men simply see the world as more aggressive due to the messages sent and received regarding their own level of aggression as compared to women. If society’s messages for its men include “You are/should be more aggressive; you are the protector of the family; you are the hunter,” then it is understandable that they would view the world as more aggressive.

Social Attraction. Light-skinned participants perceived the male target to be more socially attractive than the female target. Previous, limited work on skin tone bias has indicated that both light-skinned and dark-skinned Black people are stigmatized within their own race due to the ‘extreme’ nature of their complexion, while those who are perceived as medium-skinned sometimes experience the least bias because of their almost ‘baseline’ complexion. Therefore, perhaps when it comes to the perception of social attraction, light-skinned Black people can relate to the frustrations of skin tone bias that are often more pronounced in the experiences of Black men – that sense of ‘comradery’ may elicit a more favorable perception of the social attraction of the male confederates.

Physical Attraction. In post hoc analyses, female participants on a whole rated the confederates as more physically attractive than did the male participants. Perhaps because

women know firsthand the pressure of having to be ‘beautiful,’ their perceptions of beauty are more inclusive (as opposed to the exclusive nature of our society) resulting in higher ratings of physical attraction for all.

Of course, these “explanations” are quite speculative in nature. A few of these post hoc findings are well supported in the literature, especially the relationship between gender and physical attractiveness. In other cases, especially when discussing why a light or a medium skin toned person would evidence more bias, I am speculating and future research needs to specifically address these issues. One way to do so may be to more accurately assess (a) skin tone and (b) self judgments. With a more fine grade description of skin tone that captures the many shades of black, perhaps we can more accurately tease out the effects of one’s own skin tone on rating others. Second, by knowing more about how a Black person feels about his or her own skin tone might also serve to clear up these findings. Perhaps the light- and dark-skinned individuals have been acutely aware of their skin tone their entire lives and thus are less likely to evidence bias, whereas the “medium” toned person is less aware and, thus, more likely to evidence prejudicial responses (e.g., Devine, 1989).