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Body image as a function of colorism: testing a theoretical model

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BODY IMAGE AS A FUNCTION OF COLORISM: TESTING A
THEORETICAL MODEL

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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BODY IMAGE AS A FUNCTION OF COLORISM: TESTING A THEORETICAL MODEL

Alicia V. Hall

ABSTRACT

A Covariate Structure Model was used to examine a possible relationship between colorism as a component of body image and global psychological functioning in the hypothesized model. Two hundred-fifty-five African-American women were recruited from undergraduate psychology and social work classes to participate in the current study from state and community colleges in the southeastern United States, and from social groups and church organizations. The results indicated that the hypothesized model was not a good fit to the data; therefore, the model was re-evaluated. The results of the analysis of the revised model indicated that the revised model was not plausible. However, the model does suggest that there is a relationship between the body image when the definition includes issues of colorism and psychological functioning as measured by levels of depression and self-esteem. Therefore, the model provides direction to be taken in future research.

Chapter I

Introduction

The majority of research on physical attractiveness and body image has been limited to white populations. Few studies have included women of color, specifically African-American women. Of those conducted on African-American women, the majority have reported African-American women responding more favorably to their bodies than white women. Some researchers believe that this may be due to less concern over weight among African-American women and a greater tolerance for diversity of body shape and body size in the African-American community. However, weight is a single variable in body image or measures of beauty in the African-American community. For African-American women, skin color and facial features tend to influence body image as well and in fact, may be more salient to the beauty question than body size.

Since opinions about beauty in the United States tend to be based on white American/European standards, the difference between white women and African-American women in these physical characteristics may result in self-esteem and other psychological

issues for African-American women. It is important for clinicians to understand that the ethnocentric criteria for beauty found in the United States can have deleterious effects on African-American women. Feelings of inadequacy and inferiority about personal beauty are major themes in the mental health treatment of African-American women. Mental health professionals need to develop an awareness of these issues to truly understand the issues discussed by African-American women in therapy.

Body Image and Weight Perceptions among African-American and White Women

There have been several studies that support the notion that African-American women have a greater tolerance for body size and shape than white women. One such study was conducted by Rand & Kuldau (1990). They sampled 2,115 African-American and white adults on weight and weight concerns. They found that overall, white women who reported having no weight problem were on average ten pounds under the lower limit of normal weight ranges, whereas, African-American women reporting no weight problem were on average about 17-20 pounds above the normal weight range. Rand & Kuldau, (1990) did not publish their effect sizes for these findings, leaving the reader to wonder if the results are meaningful or due to the sample size. Rucker & Cash (1992), also suggested that African-

American women held more favorable attitudes than white women on both global and weight-related body image affects, cognitions and behaviors.

Reports also show that, in general, African-American women have a more positive attitude about their appearance than white women (Altabe, 1998). African-American women's positive attitudes about their general appearance do not seem to be affected by weight. According to Kumanyika, Wilson & Gilford-Davenport (1993), African-American women perceive themselves as attractive regardless of weight. In a sample of 500 African-American women, 40% of the women that were classified as overweight by the Body Mass Index considered their figures attractive or very attractive. Kumanyika, et. al. (1993) go on to say that almost all of the overweight women reported that their body size had not been a source of difficulty in personal or family relationships. Thus, body size did not appear to affect these women's self-concepts negatively.

Malloy & Herzberger (1998), in their study of self-esteem and body image among African-American and white women, related that African-American women had higher levels of self-esteem and a more positive body image than white women. In general, African-American women indicate that body image is less central to their self evaluation

and they are more satisfied at higher body weights (Rucker & Cash, 1992; Abrams, Allen & Grey, 1993).

There is some evidence to suggest that African-American men have greater limits of tolerance for women's body size and shape as well. In their 1996 study of body type preferences, Jackson and McGill related that African-American men preferred larger body types for women and associated more favorable characteristics (e.g. attractive, generous) and fewer unfavorable characteristics (e.g. lazy, uneducated) with same race obese women than the white men in the study. This study may provide insight as to why African-American women seemly are unaffected by weight. African-American men's preferences for larger body sizes may be reinforcing to African-American women. Thus, African-American women are encouraged to maintain heavier weights in order to be attractive to potential mates.

Body Image and Racial Identity

Having well documented the racial differences in the area of body image, some researchers began to explore whether there are cultural protective factors that reduce the likelihood that African-American women experience high levels of body dissatisfaction. It has been demonstrated that racial identity attitudes can predict self-esteem, well-being and depression in African-American women (Pyant & Yanico, 1991). It seems logical that racial identity would also

predict levels of body dissatisfaction. To the extent that African-American women identify more with their own race and ethnic culture than the dominant culture and to the extent that they interact more with other African-Americans, they would be protected from the effects of white norms regarding body type. Pyant and Yanico (1991), found that racial identity seems to provide African-American women some protection from dominant cultural norms regarding body type. However, they do not offer a hypothesis as to how racial identity provides this protection. Harris (1995) attempts to answer this question. She studied 68 African-American women regarding self-esteem, racial identity, family income, and other dimensions. The results showed that women who strongly identified as African-American demonstrated a more positive attitude about their physical appearance. She also reports that African-American women who were developing a stronger African-American self-identity report more satisfaction with specific body areas such as hips, thighs, and buttocks.

Allen, Mayo, and Michel (1993) also support this view. They found that African-American women in the lower socioeconomic status (SES) levels had significantly heavier ideals than African-American women in the high SES levels and white women in all levels of SES. Relatedly, once an African-American woman becomes assimilated into the dominant culture to the extent that she identifies more with the

dominant culture, she may become more vulnerable to body image distortions similar to those of white women (Bowen, Tomoyassu & Causce, 1991). This is evidenced by the work of Abrams, Allen & Grey (1993), who found that African-American women who are assimilated into the dominant culture and reject their own culture show similar body image related attitudes and behaviors as white women. This result is echoed by Calwell, Brownell & Wilfley (1997). Their results showed no significant differences between high SES African-American and white women on body image factors.

An overwhelming amount of literature (Rosen & Gross, 1987; Desmond, Price, Hallinan, & Smith, 1989; Rand & Kuldau, 1990; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Rucker & Cash 1992; Kumanyika, Wilson & Gilford-Davenport, 1993; Harris, 1994; Parker, Nichter, Nichter, Vuckovic, Sims & Ritenbaugh, 1995; Thompson, Corwin & Sargent, 1997; Altabe 1998) suggests that African-American women seem to be well protected from the dominant culture's body image issues. Therefore, Smith, Thompson, Raczynski & Hilner (1999) assert that factors other than body size must influence African-American women's overall evaluation of their appearance. One other factor that may influence African-American women's overall evaluation of their appearance is called colorism. How colorism influences self-esteem and psychological functioning will be closely examined in the next sections.

Colorism

Concerning color and race, Edward Shils wrote:

In itself, color is meaningless. It is not like religion which is belief and entails either voluntary or hereditary membership...It is not like kinship, which is a tangible structure in which the individual has lived, and to which he is attached....It is not like intellectual culture which is belief and an attitude toward the world...Color is just color. It is a physical, spectroscopic fact...like height or weight the mind is not involved (1967, p. 279)

For many African-Americans, color is not "just color." Color when referring to "skin description, becomes a mark of oppression, a pathological obsession, and an index of evaluation" that becomes a part of a person's being (Shade, 1990). H. Rap Brown further explains it, "skin color, in and of itself, has no real meaning. But the {society} has given it meaning - political, social, economic,... and attached to it the symbolic representation of exploitation, inferiority, injury and insult" (1969, p. 2). Because skin color has taken on such an orientation, it has also become an important psychological influence on African-American behavior and development. The term "colorism" was coined to describe the psychological phenomenon that impacts the African-American community.

The African-American community has been debating the issue of colorism for many years. Colorism can be defined as "the unnatural assignment of mental or moral traits based upon physical skin color; these traits can be either positive or negative as long as the basis [for one's thinking] is assumed to be in skin color" (Akbar, 1984 p. 35). It can be argued that colorism is a form of internalized racism or intra-group racism. This means that some members of the African-American community believe that skin color is a primary determinant of human traits and that skin color produces an inherent hierarchy among African-Americans.

Colorism affects every aspect of daily living. By the time children reach junior high school, they have well-defined stereotypes about skin color. Charles Parrish discovered in the 1940's that junior high students used 145 different terms to describe skin color. These words included "half-white," "yaller," "high yellow," "fair," "bright," "light," "redbone," "light brown," "medium brown," "brown," "brownskin," "dark brown," "chocolate," "dark," "black," "ink spot," "blue black," "blurple" and "tar baby" (Parrish, 1946). This litany of words describes how colorism is imbedded in the African-American community. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, well known in anthropological linguistics, postulates that language may not only describe the world we inhabit but also mold the way we experience it

(Hoijer, 1974). One might argue that "this litany of words" demonstrates how salient skin color is in shaping the experience of African-Americans.

Empirical Evidence of Socio-cultural Influences Underlying Colorism in Children

It has been stated in the literature that colorism reflects a socio-cultural bias that is linked to white skin as beauty, purity and goodness (Bennett, 1980; hooks, 1994; Abdullah 1998). The first scientific evidence of colorism was presented in 1947 by Clark. In his study, 253 African-American children were tested on racial identification and racial preference. Each child was presented with four dolls all of whom were the same except skin color, two were African-American and two were white. The children were then asked questions about the dolls such as "which doll would you like to play with", "which doll looks bad" and "which doll looks like you." Clark found that the majority of the children preferred the white doll and rejected the African-American doll. Approximately two thirds of the children indicated by their responses that they liked the white doll better. The white doll was the one they wanted to play with and it was considered to be the nice doll. The African-American doll was chosen to be the bad doll by 59 percent of the children.

The results of Clark's work can be criticized on methodological grounds. These grounds include the fact that African-American dolls have just recently gained popularity and become commercially available. Ergo, one has to wonder if African-American and white dolls are equivalent stimuli. That is, African-American children may have been rejecting the African-American dolls due to unfamiliarity rather than an indication of rejection of ethnicity. However, beginning in the late eighties there were several studies that replicated Clark's doll test that attained similar results (Powell-Hopson, 1986; Powell-Hopson & Hopson, 1988).

One such study was conducted by McNicol-Gopaul (1988). McNicol-Gopaul investigated the attitudes of 191 African-American preschool children in New York and Trinidad, using the doll test developed by Clark (1947). The majority of children from both New York and Trinidad preferred and identified with the white doll. McNicol-Gopaul suggests that the preference may be due to the media, parental attitudes, and favoritism shown to white children in the classroom. She urges greater participation by parents, teachers, and society in promoting racial pride and self-acceptance in African-American children.

Johnson (1992) found similar results. She examined the preferences and feeling for racial groups and the perceptions about

racial groups in children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 5 years 9 months. She tested the racial preference of 16 biracial preschoolers compared to the preferences of 28 African-American and 18 Caucasian preschoolers. Findings from the Preschool Racial Attitude Measure II (PRAM II) indicated that the mean preferences of the biracial children were not significantly different from either of their monoracial cohorts. The PRAM II scores for biracial children were primarily based on the combination of positive affect toward Caucasians and negative affect toward African-Americans. Monoracial African-American children had negative attitudes about African-Americans. Johnson's findings support the notion that African-American children have poor perceptions about what it means to be African-American in America.

The authors of the previous studies have concluded that African-American children can suffer from poor self-esteem secondary to their own perceptions of what it means to be African-American in a white-dominated society. The assumption that their results reflect either lower racial self-esteem or lower personal self-esteem can be challenged. It can be argued that these studies have nothing to do with racial self-esteem because preschoolers do not understand the social-biological meaning of race. It can also be argued that these studies do not reflect low personal self-esteem because preschool

children have yet to develop a global feeling of self-esteem that is separable into specific components (racial vs personal). However, children are initially aware of race at an early stage in life, sometimes as early as three or five years old (Russell, et. al., 1992). Yet, racial identity as a concept develops much later (Russell, et. al., 1992). A child's awareness and appreciation of the value of racial different skin colors occurs some time after racial awareness has developed. These studies may be revealing children's ability to extrapolate from information that they gather from the world. For example, if African-American children learn from fairy tales, movies, television and language that African-American is bad and white is good, then they may begin to reject things that are African-American and dark including themselves. Thus, it may be premature to say that these children have developed colorism issues.

Research also indicates that colorism was a part of African-American life even during the height of the "Black is Beautiful" movement. Georing (1971) had 218 high school students fill out questionnaires that involved perceptions and evaluations of skin color and other attributes. He found that young African-Americans did not feel that the blackest or the darkest color was the most beautiful, but brown was the most preferred color. Georing's finding is important in that African-Americans were celebrating their heritage and rejecting

white beauty standards by embracing blackness. This meant that African-Americans defined beauty in terms of the images that were reflected in their mirrors. There was beauty found in kinky hair, wide facial features and dark skin. One might be surprised that the participants did not prefer the blackest or the darkest skin color. This finding when examined in the context of social attribution theory makes sense. The previous literature suggested that light skin color was preferred in the African-American community. Georing's finding of a preference for a brown skin color reflects the times and the attitude changes that were accompanying that era.

Empirical Evidence of Colorism in Adults

Similar results have been demonstrated when examining the issue of colorism and adults. Maddox and Gray (2002) asked 82 college students to rate photographs of African-American men and women on 22 trait categories. Their findings demonstrated that African-American and white participants were more likely to describe dark-skinned African-American targets as lazy, unattractive, poor, uneducated, criminal and aggressive than the light-skinned African-American targets. Altabe (1998) gave a multiracial group of college students the Physical Appearance Discrepancy Questionnaire. She found that all groups regardless of gender and race wanted darker skin with the exception of African-American women. In fact 21.21% of the

African-American women in the sample reported that light skin was a trait desired by their culture. A significant number (60%) of African-American men and women in the sample reported that light skin was their ideal trait as well. The idea that a light skin color is more desirable trait than dark skin is prevalent among many African-Americans. In fact, African-American women believe that African-American men find light skinned women very attractive. Bond and Cash (1992) found in their sample of 66 college women that 70% of African-American women believe that African-American men perceive light skinned women as more attractive than dark women. There is some evidence to suggest that African-American women are correct in their belief that African-American men prefer light skinned African-American women. Ross (1997) investigated the importance of skin color in mate selection in African-Americans. He reports that African-American men showed a preference for dating and marrying light skinned women. The correspondent preference was not demonstrated in African-American women.

Ronald Hall (1992) also found that light skin is prized among African-Americans. He tested 83 African-American students on a self-report instrument called the Cutaneo-Chromo Correlate to assess potential skin color bias. Hall found a significant relationship between the subject's actual skin color and his/her idealized skin color. The

light skinned participants showed bias against dark skinned African-Americans, in terms of attractiveness and mate selection. The light skinned participants were less likely to find dark skinned peers attractive or identify them as potential mates. The dark skinned participants also seemed to prefer light skin but not as much as the light skinned participants. Hall concluded that his results suggest that light skinned African-Americans are not the only ones that harbor biases against members of their own racial group, but dark skinned African-Americans have biases as well. Hall's (1992) findings were supported by Hill (2002). Hill asked African-American men and women to rate other African-Americans on attractiveness. He found that skin tone influences attractiveness ratings of African-American women in a compelling and monotonic manner (i.e., as skin color gets lighter, the attractiveness ratings get higher). His findings also suggest that African-Americans perceive light skin as a feminine characteristic as skin tone did not influence the attractiveness ratings of African-American men.

Overall, the above-mentioned studies are well designed. However, it is important to note that skin color has not been operationally defined. This makes it very difficult for the reader to know what color is considered light and what color is dark. The researchers have largely left it up to the participants to decide how to

define light and dark skin color. The lack of an operational definition does make it difficult to discuss the influence of perceived skin color versus actual skin color on attractiveness. Nevertheless, these studies demonstrate that in general, skin color is important in perceptions of physical attractiveness.

Skin color biases are not limited to physical attractiveness. They have been illustrated to influence the perceptions of other characteristics as well. Wilson (1991-92) documents some of the other characteristics that are influenced by colorism. Eighty participants, consisting of African-American and white college students, were shown 12 pictures of African-American women and asked to give their impressions of each photo. Regardless of the individual woman's attractiveness, the participants almost always rated the dark skinned women as less successful, less happy in love, less physically attractive, less physically and emotionally healthy, less popular and less intelligent than their light skinned counterparts (Wilson 1991-92, cited in Russell et. al., 1992).

Interaction of Facial Features with Skin Color and Other Characteristics

The issue of skin color and facial features was first investigated by Johnson in 1947. He studied a sample of 25 African-American and white men. These men were asked to rate the photographs of ten

African-American women on physical attractiveness. The women were chosen and ranked, by independent judges, from the most Caucasian "looking" to the most African "looking" by skin color and thickness of features (e.g. lips, nose). Both white and African-American men rated the most Caucasian "looking" women the most attractive and the most African "looking" women the lowest in physical attractiveness (Johnson, 1947).

Neal (1988) addressed the influence of skin color and facial features (nose and lips) on the perceptions of physical attractiveness of African-American women. Eighty African-American participants were presented slides of "unattractive" or "attractive", light or dark skinned African-American women. The photographs were independently rated as attractive or unattractive by a panel of undergraduate judges. These women had traditional African or Caucasian facial features. The participants were asked to rate the photographs on characteristics of physical attractiveness, social desirability, success, inner qualities of sensitivity, self-confidence, and a variety of other items. Results indicated that facial features served to influence stereotypes of physical attractiveness, and perceived skin color appeared to interact with facial features to affect the resulting perceptions of physical attractiveness (Neal, 1988). Within individual models, attractiveness ratings influenced the rater's perception of the

model's skin color. The models who received high attractiveness ratings were also perceived to be light skinned.

Hall (1994) also investigated the interaction of skin color and facial features (i.e., nose and lips) on perceptions of attractiveness. Eighty African-American participants were asked to rate pictures of women on their attractiveness. The researcher manipulated skin color and facial features in photographs of an African-American woman who became the target of the investigation. The results showed that there was a reliable interaction effect between skin color and facial features. The results revealed that when the target woman had light skin, she was viewed as attractive regardless of the type of facial features she possessed. On the other hand, when she was dark skinned and had traditionally African features, she was perceived as very unattractive. Surprisingly, when the target woman was darkly skinned and had white facial features, she was perceived as attractively as her light skinned counterpart. The results suggest that facial features may be more important in the standards of beauty than previously believed.

Chambers, Clark, Dantzler & Baldwin (1994) studied the influence of facial features and African-American self-consciousness (or racial identity as measured by the Racial Identity Attitude Scale) on perceptions of attractiveness. They found that students with low African-American self-consciousness were more likely to rate African-

American women with white-like facial features (having a narrow nose and thin lips) more positively than African-American women with traditional African features (a broad nose and full/thick lips).

Conversely, students who had high African-American self awareness were more likely to rate African-American women with traditional African features more positively than African-American women with white-like facial features.

These studies have examined colorism as a means of investigating physical attractiveness. In most of these studies participants were asked to rate two African-American women of varying skin colors on attractiveness. This type of methodology raises several questions. Were the participants in these studies responding to some characteristic of the person in the photograph other than the variables of skin color or facial features? Even with significant results it is unclear that the construct of colorism is being measured. The notable exception in this group of studies is Hall (1994). By controlling for the individual differences among the models, she was able to get an accurate indicator of the influence of skin color and facial features on perceptions of physical attractiveness. Another limitation, the skin color assessment procedures used were inadequate because they did not represent the diversity of colors among African-Americans.

Ramifications of Colorism on Global Psychological Functioning

Bennett (1980) states that beauty in American society has always been appraised by white standards and that African-American beauty in particular, has been made to "doubt itself and to disguise itself by the cruel and artificial standards of a society which says always and everywhere that (looking) Black is bad and (looking) White is good" (p. 159-60). Abdullah (1998) concurs with this sentiment. She asserts that African-American women, at one time or another, experience some feeling of self-hatred to the extent that they evaluate and devalue their physical characteristics by referencing beauty standards on the dominant culture.

The lack of America's tolerance for its growing diversity often causes African-Americans to experience conflict in their perceptions of attractiveness and global self-esteem (Hall, 1995). In order to address the question of self-esteem and skin color, Robinson and Ward (1995) studied 123 African-Americans on skin color and self-esteem. They used a self-report measure of skin color and self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg Self-esteem Index. Although a relationship between self-esteem and skin color satisfaction did not exist, there was a significant relationship between skin color and self-esteem. Specifically, the global self-esteem of the participants who categorically self-reported a dark skin color was lower than the

participants who self-reported their skin color as light or somewhere in between. Insights into these findings were offered by Cord (1997). She also examined the relationship between self-esteem and skin color. She was surprised to find that as skin color satisfaction increased for darker skinned participants, their reported levels of self-esteem decreased. Cord explains this result by differentiating satisfaction and acceptance/resignation of one's skin color. She suggests that darker skinned participants may be expressing resignation rather than a satisfaction with their darker color. She also raises the following question: have darker skinned individuals convinced themselves that their skin color is okay but still experience the pain that colorism often inflicts?

The studies that purport to investigate colorism and ideal skin color use measures that are self-report. This gives rise to the difficulty of determining what color is classified as dark and what color is classified as light. Because skin color is not defined in these studies, it makes it arduous to answer the question: How dark does one have to be to have lowered self-esteem? Although Cord provided a range of "skin colors" for her participants to describe their skin color, she decided to group her participants by color arbitrarily. She decided what skin colors constituted light, medium and dark. She did not

come up with these categories scientifically. Therefore, the reader is left with questions regarding the actual skin color of her respondents.

Reduced self-esteem is not the only psychological ramification of issues with colorism. A psychological disorder that can be manifested as a result of colorism is depression. Recent studies have indicated an association between depression and racial discrimination in African-Americans (Gray & Jones, 1987; Watts- Jones, 1990). Gray & Jones (1987), in their work on depression and African-Americans, found that the most common presenting problem for African-American women in therapy was depression. They also reported that discussing racism was important in the therapeutic process because colorism is a form of intra-group racism. One could speculate that there is an association between colorism and depression similar to the association between depression and racial discrimination in African-Americans. However, there aren't any quantitative data to support this assertion.

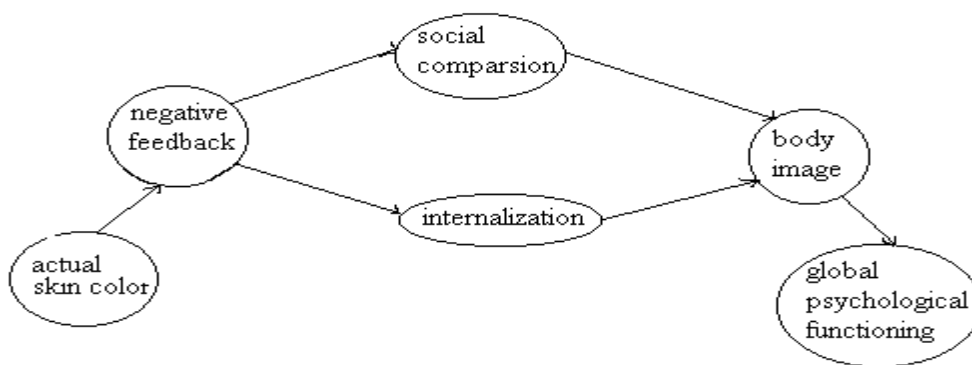
What is Absent in the Body Image Literature?

As we have seen, the majority of the previous literature has suggested that weight is not a key determinant in the body image perceptions of African-American women. However, the psychological community has failed to determine what is relevant to African-American women in predicting levels of body image satisfaction. The literature has been silent for the most part on this issue. Therefore,

the time has come to investigate the variables that may influence body image in African-American women.

The body image field has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years. Many researchers have begun to examine causal relationships that better explain the influence of certain variables on body image. One such study was conducted by Thompson, Covert & Stormer (1999). They investigated the relationship between appearance-based social comparison, developmental factors, and body dissatisfaction. The results showed that social comparison mediated the effect of teasing on body image and eating disturbance. The findings also showed that body image mediated the effects of teasing on eating disturbance and that there was a direct link between eating disturbance and psychological functioning. A similar theoretical model may be useful describing the relationship between colorism, body image and psychological functioning in African-American women.

Figure 1: The hypothesized theoretical model



Theoretical Explanation of the Model

Socio-cultural Influences

The starting point of this model is socio-cultural influences. It is important to recognize that society greatly influences how individuals think and feel about themselves and others. It is society for the most part that dictates values and mores, including what is considered attractive. These values are passed along by family, peers and the media. In the body image literature, it has been well documented that social cultural influences have a powerful effect on the development and maintenance of body image disturbance in western society (Thompson, Hienberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999).

Negative Appearance-Related Feedback

The next step in the model is negative appearance-related feedback. Research suggests that teasing or appearance-related feedback can have a profound effect on how a woman feels about herself and others. In particular, body image research clearly demonstrates that negative feedback about one's appearance has a significant influence on one's self-image (Fabian & Thompson, 1989). Unfortunately, there have not been any published studies about the impact of teasing and colorism on the self image of African-American women. However, there is some anecdotal information in the literature that implies that a similar relationship exists between teasing and

colorism. In other words, negative feedback about one's appearance in regards to skin color and facial features may affect self-images.

Neal & Wilson (1989) report that many African-American women in therapy report issues with skin color and facial features. One particular sentiment expressed in the sessions is anger and resentment over the discrimination practiced in the African-American community itself. These women articulate that difficulties with the issue of skin color and facial features initially arose from others in the African-American community, who constantly comment on their color and features. Feelings of resentment and anger about the possibility that perhaps one is too dark or too unattractive to males, are just as common as feelings of guilt and shame about the possibility that one has enjoyed unfair advantages because of lightness of skin color or narrowness of facial features (Okazawa-Rey et al, 1986).

Boyd-Franklin (1991) points out that the negative feedback has its origins not just in societal attitudes but in families as well. She details how families can ostracize and ridicule darker members of the family and make them feel unworthy of love and attention. Similarly, a light skinned member of a darker colored family may be ostracized by siblings for "thinking" that they are special and treated with contempt. The negative appearance feedback one experiences may be related to a hypersensitivity that leads to: 1) comparing one's self on

attractiveness to other people in society, and 2) an internalization of society's beauty ideal. Again, these themes and their impact of global psychological functioning remain to be demonstrated empirically.

Social Comparisons

The negative appearance related feedback may lead to the individual to compare herself to others in the community, such as family, friends, media images and the idealized self-image. If one finds herself lacking in these comparisons, she may develop negative thoughts and feelings about her body. The body image literature has demonstrated that people become distressed when engaging in comparisons that leave them feeling inferior on some attribute (Thompson et.al, 1999). More specifically, the self-ideal discrepancy explains some of the distress that is caused by making comparisons. This theory asserts that individuals compare their real selves to an idealized self, which then motivates them to attain a match between the real self and the internalized ideal self (Thompson et. al, 1999).

In the colorism domain, there are not any qualitative data to support the notion of social comparisons. However, one can see the struggle African-American women experience trying to match the ideal self to the real self by examining the billion-dollar cosmetic industry geared toward African-American women. This industry offers a myriad of products that will lighten the skin and offers makeup techniques

that mask the shape and size of the nose and lips (Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1992).

Internalization

According to Lakoff and Shier (1984), the American beauty standard is blond hair, blue eyes, and a thin body. They acknowledge that it is difficult for all women to live up to this beauty standard, but that women of color have a particularly difficult time meeting this beauty standard because nothing in their aspect is reflected by the beauty ideal. For many African-American women their skin color, facial features and body type makes them look and feel very different from the images of white beauty that can be found on television and in magazines. Realizing this, C.C.I. Hall (1995) declares that the beauty standard based in white America may lead to a greater vulnerability of African-American women to body image dissatisfaction. This would be particularly relevant for the African-American woman that is highly acculturated into the dominant society, because she has internalized their cultural values, norms and mores which include the beauty ideal. The psychic conflict that seems to result from this internalization was thoroughly discussed in an earlier section of the paper. In her qualitative study, Boyd-Franklin, (1991), found that even among African-American women with strong positive racial identification, many can recall earlier periods in their lives, especially in adolescence,

when they experienced a great deal of pain around these issues. The question that has yet to be answered is: what role does racial identification play in internalization of societal norms?

It has been suggested that racial identity is a protective factor in developing weight-related body image issues (Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Harris, 1995). Does the same hold true for colorism? In other words, is someone who strongly identifies with African-American culture, less likely to have internalized American beauty standards? Or could the acculturation issue play out in another manner? It may be that the more one is acculturated into the African-American community the more vulnerable she is to issues of colorism. This may occur because the negative appearance feedback she is receiving is from other African-Americans. There is some research to suggest that African-Americans are more sensitive to criticism from other African-Americans than they are to criticism received from whites (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991). Ergo, it may be much more disparaging to receive negative feedback from members of your own ethnic group than persons who are outside of your ethnicity.

The relationship between internalization and social comparisons

There may be a cyclical relationship between internalization and social comparisons. Negative feedback gives rise to internalization and social comparisons. One may speculate that as the individual is

internalizing the cultural beauty standards she is making the social comparisons to try to improve her appearance or match more closely her idealized beauty standard. As she makes changes, she will continue to make social comparisons. This may make her newly internalized beauty standards more entrenched in her belief system. The more the beauty standards are internalized the more likely she is to make social comparisons as measure of how successful she is in reaching her idealized self. If she finds herself still falling short of her goal, she may strengthen the internalization of the beauty standard as she seeks to improve herself.

The impact of sociocultural factors on the development and maintenance of colorism may explain why the literature seems to suggest a relationship between skin color and self-esteem in African-Americans, but not a relationship between self-esteem and skin color satisfaction (Robinson and Ward, 1995). Robinson and Ward (1995) demonstrated that for participants who self-reported a darker skin color, global self-esteem was lower than the participants who self reported their skin color was light or somewhere in between. Perhaps not being able to match the real self to the ideal self makes one resigned to her skin color. She does not feel overall as good about herself or her body as her lighter skinned counterparts, which would impact upon her global psychological functioning.

Colorism

The combination of internalization and social comparisons will lead to the development of skin color issues within the individual. The issues will comprise more than just beauty but of other characteristics as well as intelligence and other personality traits. As previously described in the paper, there have been a number of research studies on skin color preference in terms of attractiveness and other personality characteristics. With the exception of Chambers et. al. (1994), the literature is silent on the relationship between level of internalization, social comparison, and colorism. One could hypothesize that women who have low racial identity or are highly acculturated into the dominant society, will be more likely to endorse a preference for light skin and white-like facial features.

Body Image and Global Psychological Functioning

It would be expected that there is direct relationship between subscribing to these beauty standards and how satisfied she is with her body, in particular her skin color and facial features. Because of the connection between physical appearance and self-worth in many women, discussing this connection constitutes an essential aspect of therapy. For African-American women in particular, the issue of skin color can be the underlying variable that feeds into other issues such

as low self-esteem, peer, and family relationship problems. The concerns about skin color and facial features are a common topic in therapy (Neal & Wilson, 1989). Boyd-Franklin (1991) concurs that racial identification, skin color, and body image issues are often among the most painful, personal, and difficult issues to discuss. She goes on to say that these issues are so charged and toxic that often they are not discussed among African-American women in social gatherings. They are also not often brought out in cross-racial therapy (i.e. a white therapist and an African-American client). The issues of skin color and facial features affect many aspects of African-American growth and development. For African-American women who suffer from body image issues, the psychological ramifications may be similar to white women with body image issues in terms of low self-esteem, depression and pathological acting out behaviors.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of colorism on the psychological well being of African-American women. This study also seeks to examine if there are causal relationships that better explain the influence of colorism on body image. Specifically, this study will examine the role of skin color and facial features as it pertains to body image. Given that African-American women are surrounded by images that promote white standards of beauty, this

study will provide an opportunity to examine how African-American women are uniquely affected by the messages that they receive that white standard of beauty is the only valid standard.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is that a causal relationship model that includes skin color and facial features will provide a clearer understanding of the issues African-American women have with body image. Specifically, it is expected that there will be a relationship between self-esteem and body image, when body image is not narrowly defined as weight, but encompasses skin color and facial features as well. One's actual skin color will be related to the frequency of skin color-related teasing one experienced which is associated with the internalization of culture and social comparison. These variables will affect one's body image, which in turn will be related to one's levels of self-esteem and depression.

Chapter II

Methods

With respect to physical appearance, the present study concerns itself with the domains of skin color and facial features only. The rationale for doing so is based on the literature, which seems to suggest that in general for African-American women evaluating appearance skin color and facial features is primary, whereas weight, body shape and hair texture are secondary.

Participants

Two hundred-seventy-five African-American women were recruited from undergraduate psychology and social work classes to participate in the current study from state and community colleges in the southeastern United States. Participants were also recruited from social groups and church organizations. Participation in the study was voluntary, however, psychology students were given credit toward their psychology course. All other participants were entered in a raffle for a cash prize. Twenty of the participants did not satisfactorily complete the manipulation check and were excluded from the study, thus the final sample size was 255. The participants ranged in age

from 18-75 (\bar{x} =34.8, sd =3.27). The majority of the participants were from the southeast portion of the United States (83.23%) with at least some college (92.35%) and identified their socioeconomic status middle class (79.46%).

Measures

The Perception of Teasing Scale (PTS; Adopted from Thompson, et. al., 1999 - see Appendix C)- The PTS was used to measure the frequency of teasing. It contains two aspects of appearance related teasing and two affective scales related to teasing. These subscales were used in the present study because of the benefits of multiple indicators of latent variables used with CSM. It is a ten item scale that measures a global type of teasing related to skin color and facial features. Psychometric properties are not available for this measure.

Frequency of Teasing-Skin Color (FTSC)- This subscale contains six items that measure the frequency of complexion related teasing.

Frequency of Teasing-Facial Features (FTFF)- This subscale contains three items that measure the frequency of facial features related teasing.

Effect of Teasing-Skin Color (ETSC)- This subscale contains six items that measure the overall emotional effect the complexion related teasing had on the participants.

Effect of Teasing-Facial Features(ETFF)- This subscale contains three items that measure the overall emotional effect the facial features related teasing had on the participants.

The Social Comparison Scale (SCS; Adapted from Thompson, et. al., 1999 - see Appendix D)- The SCS contains three subscales that provide an index of different aspects of appearance related social comparisons. Psychometric properties are not available for this measure.

Social Comparison Scale-Skin Color (SCSSC)- A one item scale that measures the frequency of comparison of skin color in the presence of other African-Americans.

Social Comparison Scale-Facial Features (SCSFF)- A three item scale that measures the frequency of comparison of facial features, such as nose and lips, in the presence of other African-Americans.

Social Comparison Scale-Others (SCSO)- A two item scale that assess the degree of overall comparison of physical appearance in the presence of other African-Americans.

Physical Characteristics Satisfaction Scale (PCSS; Adopted from Bond & Cash, 1992 - see Appendix E)- The PCSS contains three subscales that provide an index of the amount of satisfaction with skin color and facial features. Psychometric properties are not available for this measure.

Physical Characteristics Satisfaction Scale-Satisfaction (PCSSAT)- A four item scale that measures the participants overall satisfaction with their skin color and facial features in relation to other African-Americans. Psychometric properties are not available for this measure.

Physical Characteristics Satisfaction Scale-Family (PCSSFX)- A two item scale that measures the participants view of their skin color and facial features in relation to their family members.

Physical Characteristics Satisfaction Scale-Others (PCSSO)- A two item scale that measures the participants view of their skin color and facial features in relation to their peers.

Physical Characteristics Assessment Procedure (PCAP Adapted from Bond & Cash, 1992 - See Appendix F). A set of 4x4-inch color squares of African-American skin colors were presented to the participants on a poster board. The participants received a specific set of instructions. The skin colors ranged from very light/creamed colored to very dark or ebony color. Participants were asked to choose the skin color that most resembles their actual skin color, the skin color they would most prefer, the color they believe is admired by African-American men and the color most admired by African-American women and within their family. A similar procedure was implemented for the facial features. A set of 4x4-inch squares of facial

features were presented to the participants on a poster board. The facial features ranged from traditionally Caucasian like (narrow nose and thin lips) to traditionally African like (broad nose and full lips). Participants were asked to choose the facial features that most resembles their actual facial features, the facial features they would most prefer, the facial features they believe is admired by African-American men and the facial features most admired by African-American women and finally within their family. Psychometric properties are not available for this measure.

Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B; Parham and Helms 1981, see Appendix G)- The RIAS was used to assess the extent to which a person has developed a positive racial identity. It was designed to assess the four stages in Cross's Negro to Black conversion model. The Scale consists of 30 items which participants responded using a five point Likert type scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Scores for each attitude will be obtained by summing the responses to the appropriate keyed items. Parham and Helms report the internal consistency reliability of .67, .72, .66 and .77 for the pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion and internalized attitudes respectively.

Eating Disorder Inventory - Body Dissatisfaction scale (EDI-BD; Garner, 1991 see Appendix H)- The EDI-BD is a seven-item likert type

scale which measures the participants' subjective feelings of dissatisfaction with their bodies. Garner reports the internal consistency reliability of the EDI-BD is .91 for adults.

Rosenberg Self-esteem Inventory (RSEI, Rosenberg, 1965- see Appendix I)- The RESI was used as one of the measures to assess global psychological functioning. The RSEI is a Gutman type scale of ten items used as index of global self-esteem. It is the most widely used measure of self-esteem with norms. It has good to excellent reliability and validity studies in a wide range of samples (Rosenberg, 1981; Rosenberg & Simmons, 1972, Alfonso, 1995).

African-American Acculturation Scale-33 (AAAS; Landrine & Klonoff, 1995 - See Appendix J)- The AAAS was used to assess the how acculturated the participants are to the African-American culture. The scale contains 33 items that measure various aspects of African-American culture. The scores on the AAAS are not related to social class, education, or social class of origin. Landrine and Klonoff reports the internal consistency reliabilities of the of the AAAS range from .81 to .88.

Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, 1961 - See Appendix K)- The BDI was used to assess depressive symptomatology. The BDI, a self-report measure, has been used extensively in research and clinical settings to screen for depression. It has also been shown to be

reliable and valid in clinical and college student samples (Kendall, Beck, Hammen, & Ingram, 1987).

Manipulation check- To ensure that the participants were attending to the questionnaires, three items were embedded which asked the participants to write a certain letter in a space, circle an answer to a question and draw a triangle in the margin.

Procedure

Participants were run in small groups in University classrooms and church activity areas. Upon arrival participants were told that they would be participating in a study about African-American women's feelings and attitudes about certain topics. They were asked to read the consent form (see Appendix A) before signing it. The participants were asked if they had any questions regarding the study or the consent form. All questions were answered and the consent forms collected.

The participants were told to read all questions carefully and to answer all questions truthfully. The participants were given a questionnaire packet. The first page of the packet was the demographic form (see Appendix B). This form allowed the researcher to collect background information on the participants. The subsequent pages of the packet was the remaining measures (See Appendices C, D, E, G, H, I, J, and K). The instruments were counterbalanced to

control for order effects. There were five orders in which the participants could have received the instruments. Completed packets were collected by the researcher at the back of the room. After submitting her packet, each individual subject was presented with the PCAP (see Appendix F). Participants placed their responses on a sheet given to them by the researcher. Participants were not be allowed to touch the colors for direct comparisons with their skin.

Once participation in the study was completed, all participants were debriefed about the specific purpose of the study and extras credit points were given to the psychology students. All other participants were enrolled in the raffle.

Data Analysis

Covariate Structure Modeling (CSM) was used to examine specific directional and non-directional influences between the measured and latent variables of the hypothesized model. The CSM produces two different models. The first model is a measurement model that specifies how latent variables are reflected in terms of the measured variables. The second model is a structural model, which is used to specify the directional and non-directional influences between the measured and latent variables (Arbuckle & Worthke, 1999). The fit indexes that were used to evaluate the hypothesized model were the goodness of fit index (GFI), the comparative fix index (CFI) and the

root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The goodness of fit index (GFI) is a measure of the relative amount of variance and covariance in the sample covariance matrix that is jointly explained by the restricted covariance matrix. The cutoff value for the GFI is .90. The comparative fit index (CFI) measures the relative reduction in lack of fit as estimated by the non-central χ^2 of a target model versus a baseline model (Hoyle, 1995). The CFI cutoff value is .95. The GFI and CFI were considered appropriate fit indexes because they tend to perform consistently using the maximum likelihood estimation with sample sizes of 250 or greater. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is one of the most informative criteria in CSM. The RMSEA measures how well the model would fit the population if its covariance matrix were available. This allows one to generalize from the observed data to the population. The critical values of the RMSEA are as follows: values less than .050 indicate good fit, and values between .080 and .10 indicate mediocre fit, and values greater than .10 demonstrates poor fit. The critical value used to measure the significance of the parameter and variance estimates was ± 1.96 .

Chapter III

Results

Chronbach's coefficient alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the adapted measures. The internal consistencies are presented in Table 1. All measures showed good internal consistency ranging from .72 to .89, with the exception of the PCAP and the SCS. Their alphas were .59 and .53 respectively.

Table 1: Reliabilities of adapted measures

Latent Variable	Measured Variable	Alpha
Negative Feedback	Frequency of Teasing-Skin Color	.77
	Frequency of Teasing-Facial Features	.72
	Effects of Teasing-Skin Color	.79
	Effects of Teasing-Facial Features	.79
Social Comparison	Social Comparison Scale-Skin Color	.55
	Social Comparison Scale-Features	.53
	Social Comparison Scale-Others	.51
Body Image	Physical Characteristics Satisfaction Scale-Satisfaction	.89
	Physical Characteristics Satisfaction Scale-Family	.87
	Physical Characteristics Satisfaction Scale-Others	.79
	Physical Characteristics Assessment Procedure	.59

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and Pearson product moment correlations of the variables in the model

Table 2: Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. ASC										
2. FTS	.020									
3. ETF	.331	.795**								
4. SCS	.017	.050	.037							
5. RAISB	.009	.002	.010	.007						
6. AAAS	.042	.023	.003	.022	.427*					
7. PCSS	.673**	.064	.137	-.012	.313*	.372*				
8. PCAP	.387*	.022	.058	-.072	.039	.006	.574*			
9. EDI-BD	-.025	.005	.013	.034	.001	-.044	.321*	.104		
10. BDI	.635**	.061	.061	.012	-.021	.015	.077	.127	.211	
11. RSEI	-.281*	.015	.073	.165	.402**	.225*	.155	.081	-.575**	.682**
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>								
1. ASC	2.15	0.83								
2. FTS	3.95	2.45								
3. ETF	2.33	2.83								
4. SCS	1.62	1.37								
5. RAISB	50.75	3.52								
6. AAAS	347.22	10.69								
7. PCSS	4.75	1.89								
8. PCAP	4.47	2.87								
9. EDI-BD	8.64	3.04								
10. BDI	10.57	3.35								
11. RSEI	24.60	2.67								

*p<. 05; **p < .01.

The zero order correlations revealed some interesting association between the variables. There was a significant positive relationship between the participants' skin color and the amount of satisfaction they reported with their complexions ($r = .673, p < .001$). As the skin color of participants darkened the level of satisfaction with their skin color increased. Interestingly, the correlations between skin color and

depression and self-esteem seemed to contradict the previous finding. The participants reported increased levels of depression with darker complexions ($r = .635, p < .001$). There was a significant inverse relationship between the participants' skin color and the level of self-esteem ($r = -.281, p < .05$). The participants reported higher levels of self-esteem as the skin color became lighter. There were significant associations between the variables racial identity and physical characteristics satisfaction, and racial identity and self-esteem ($r = .313, p < .05$ and $r = .402, p < .001$ respectively). Those participants with positive racial identity reported higher levels of satisfaction with their skin color and facial features. The participants with positive racial identity also reported higher levels of self-esteem. The results also show significant associations between the variables acculturation and physical characteristics satisfaction, and acculturation and self-esteem ($r = .313, p < .05$ and $r = .402, p < .001$ respectively). As the participants level of acculturation in the African-American culture increased higher levels of satisfaction with skin color and facial features was reported. The participants also reported higher levels of self-esteem with increased levels of acculturation. The data indicated significant inverse associations between the variables self-esteem and body satisfaction, and self-esteem and depression ($r = -.575, p < .001$ and $r = -.682, p < .001$ respectively). As the participants

dissatisfaction with their body size and shape increased lower levels of self-esteem was reported. The participants also reported lower levels of depression with increased levels of self-esteem. There was a trend in that data for the associations between the variables of self-esteem and social comparison, self-esteem and physical characteristics satisfaction ($r = .165, p = .07$ and $r = .155, p = .07$ respectively).

The hypothesized model was estimated with AMOS using the maximum likelihood estimation. Structural parameter estimates and factor loadings are provided in Figure 2 (See Appendix L). The parameter estimates provided are the standardized estimates. The standardized estimates indicate the number of standard deviation change in the dependent variable per standard deviations change in the independent variable when all other independent variables means are at zero (Hoyle, 1995). Standardized estimates also can be interpreted similarly to effect-size estimates.

The overall model fit indexes, parameter estimates and latent variable variances are listed in Table 3. The latent variable variances are all significant at the .05 level. The standard errors for the latent variables and the parameters are concerning in that they are relatively small and close to zero. Byrne (2001) states that as standard errors approach zero, the test statistic cannot be defined. Thus, the fact that the latent variable variances and the parameters estimates are

significant is meaningless. The small standard errors are an indication of the model's poor fit. The obtained chi-square test for an exact fit of the model to the data revealed that the model is not plausible. Due to the facility at which the chi-square test of exact fit was rejected, the chi-square for a close fit was applied, which is a less biased estimator (MacCullum, Brown, & Sugawara, 1996). The close fit chi-square also indicated that the model is not plausible.

Table 3: Variances, standard error, critical ratios and overall fit measures for the hypothesized model

<u>Latent Variable</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>	<u>Critical Ratio</u>
Actual Skin Color(asc)	0.532	0.118	4.522
Negative Feedback (nf)	0.553	0.092	5.985
Social Comparison (sc)	0.100	0.017	5.759
Internalization (int)	0.302	0.053	5.729
Body Image (bi)	1.059	0.129	8.612
Global Functioning(pf)	0.124	0.026	4.827
<u>Parameters</u>	<u>Estimate</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>	<u>Critical Ratio</u>
asc-nf	0.476	0.093	5.933
nf-sc	-0.438	0.058	-1.419
nf-int	0.586	0.038	7.104
sc-bi	-0.413	0.145	-2.780
int-bi	0.286	0.220	4.127
bi-pf	-0.420	0.023	-5.617
<u>Goodness of Fit Indexes</u>			
Model Chi-square	$\chi^2_{113}=435.982$		
Probability of exact fit	p= 0.000		
Probability of close fit	p= 0.0000		
Goodness of Fit Index	.859		
Comparative Fix Index	.847		
RMSEA	.106		

any critical ratio value over the cutoff value of ± 1.96 is significant at $p < .05$

Other fit indexes also indicate that the model is not an exact fit for the data. The GFI of the hypothesized model (.859) is below the cutoff value of .90. The CFI of the hypothesized model (.847) is below the cutoff value of .95. The RMSEA of the hypothesized model (.106) is above the liberal critical value of .080.

The results indicated that the hypothesized model was not a good fit for the data; therefore, the model was re-evaluated. In the revised model, the subscales of the variable PCSS were used instead of the total score. The variable PCAP was removed from the model. This action seemed logical due to the poor manner in which the PCAP variable loaded on the latent variable body image.

The overall model fit indexes, parameter estimates and latent variable variances for the revised model are listed in Table 4. Standardized structural parameter estimates and factor loadings are provided in Figure 3 (See Appendix M). The latent variable variances are all significant at the .05 level. The standard errors for the latent variables and the parameters are relatively small and close to zero. Again, the fact that the latent variable variances and the parameters estimates are significant is meaningless. The small standard errors should be viewed as an indication of the model's poor fit. The results of the analysis of the revised model indicated that the obtained chi-

square test for an exact fit and the close fit chi-square of the revised model to the data revealed that the revised model is not plausible.

Table 4: Variances, standard error, critical ratios and overall fit measures for the revised model

<u>Latent Variable</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>	<u>Critical Ratio</u>
Actual Skin Color	0.528	0.118	4.481
Negative Feedback	0.551	0.093	5.953
Social Comparison	0.113	0.019	5.990
Internalization	0.311	0.054	5.741
Body Image	0.089	0.019	4.602
Global Functioning	0.151	0.047	3.213
<u>Parameters</u>	<u>Estimate</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>	<u>Critical Ratio</u>
asc-nf	0.449	0.094	5.701
nf-sc	-0.129	0.067	-1.573
nf-int	0.564	0.038	7.055
sc-bi	0.215	0.047	2.221
int-bi	-0.332	0.067	-4.008
bi-pf	0.259	0.101	3.097

Goodness of Fit Indexes

Model Chi-square	$\chi^2_{129}=350.720$
Probability of exact fit	p= 0.0000
Probability of close fit	p= 0.0000
Goodness of Fit Index	.886
Comparative Fix Index	.865
RMSEA	.082

any critical ratio value over the cutoff value of ± 1.96 is significant at $p < .05$

Other fit indexes also indicate that the model is not an exact fit for the data. The GFI of the revised model (.886) is below the cutoff value of .90. The CFI of the hypothesized model (.865) is below the cutoff

value of .95. The RMSEA of the hypothesized model (.082) is above the liberal critical value of .080.

Due to the advanced mean age of the participants, a post hoc correlation analysis was performed to determine if the variable age was significantly associated with any of the other variables in the model. The results of this analysis demonstrated that the variables of teasing ($r=-.79$), body image (the EDI-II ($r=-.71$) and the PCSS ($r=.55$)), and internalization (AAAS ($r=.84$)) were significantly associated with age. The variable of teasing was negatively associated with age, meaning as the participants' age increased, they reported less frequency of teasing and less affect of teasing. The older women in the study reported more satisfaction with their bodies. They also were more likely to report higher levels of acculturation to the African-American culture.

Chapter IV

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that neither the hypothesized nor revised model of colorism accurately described the data. Thus the hypothesis was not supported. However, the goodness of fit measures used to assess the fit of the model were all very close to being significant, suggesting that perhaps with more adjustments the model may fit the data reasonably well. This may indicate that there is some merit to the model. The data hint at the relationship between body image, when the definition includes issues of colorism, and psychological functioning as measured by levels of depression and self-esteem in adult African-American women. This is not only supported by the trend in the fit indexes but in the findings of the Pearson correlations as well. The zero order correlations show a significant association the participants' skin color and level of depression, and the participants' skin color and level of self-esteem. The correlations indicate that there is a relationship between these variables. The hypothesized model does not accurately explain the relationship.

When discussing the fit indexes, it is important to point out that the cut off points for the indexes of fit are arbitrary (Bollen, 1989). Sobel and Bohrnstedt speak to the point directly in their 1985 article which states that fit indexes provide no guarantee whatsoever that a model is useful. Byrne (2001, p.88) concurs, stating "fit indexes yield information bearing only on a models lack of fit. More importantly, they can in no way reflect the extent to which the model is plausible..." Thus, the non-significant findings may not address the value of the model. It is noteworthy that the model in this study is the first of it's kind. As such, it could be argued that this model provides a road map for others to follow.

Why the Data Did Not Fit the Model

There are several reasons that may account for the model not fitting the data. First, some of the adapted measures used in the study were not as psychometrically sound as the parent measures (the SCS and the PCAP). This issue was particularly important for the latent variable of social comparison. The SCS was the only instrument used to measure this latent variable. Therefore, the results for this latent variable may not be reliable and should be interpreted very cautiously. Having included this instrument, with its mediocre reliability, may have contributed to the poor performance of the hypothesized model.

Second, the hypothesized model used in this study was patterned after a model that had an identified population of adolescent females (Thompson, Coovert & Stormer, 1999). The women in this study were much older than the participants in the previous study. It appears the age of the participants in this study had an effect on the efficacy of the hypothesized model. This was confirmed by a post-hoc correlation analysis. The participants' age was significantly correlated with the variables of teasing, body image, and internalization. The older participants reported being teased less often than their younger counterparts. They also reported less emotional pain as a result of being teased. Perhaps the issue of teasing is more salient in the adolescent years than in adulthood. The older women in the study reported more satisfaction with their bodies. Therefore, these variables were not reliable indicators of the influence of colorism on global psychological functioning in adult women. The older participants also were more likely to report higher levels of acculturation to the African-American culture. Thus the advanced age of the participants seems to have contributed to the poor performance of the model. The differences in the responses of the participants based on their age may be due to a couple of factors: 1) age differences are due to the developmental levels of the participants, and 2) age acted as a cohort variable in the data. The lack of

significant findings may be a function of the various maturity levels of the participants. As one gets older, physical appearance, as a source of self-esteem, may become less salient a feature; instead, one may rely more on internal qualities and characteristics to bolster one's self-esteem. The accomplishments and the struggles of daily living may be more salient in adult women, therefore, much more likely to have a greater impact on psychological functioning than the measures used in this study. The other factor about variable of age in the study is that there may have been two age cohorts in the study. Because of the generational differences in the participants, it could be argued that the life experiences of the younger and older women are very different. The older group lived through the Jim Crow era or participated in the civil rights and "Black is Beautiful" movement of the last century and have a greater sense of their racial identity; whereas, the younger women may still be struggling with what it means to be African-American in America. Thus their approach to the measures would be very different.

Third, the large residuals in some of the latent variables seem to indicate that the model failed to include some relevant factors involved in the relationship of these variables. One such factor may be socioeconomic status (ses). Thompson and Keith (2002) found that the relationship between skin color and self-esteem was moderated by

socioeconomic status. For example, there was no relationship between skin color and self-esteem among women who have a more privileged socioeconomic status. Conversely, the association between skin color and self-esteem was stronger in women who were from less privileged socioeconomic sectors. Specifically, darker-skinned women with the lowest incomes displayed the lowest self-esteem, but self-esteem increases as skin color lightens. The Thompson and Keith (2002) study provides insight into the findings of this study. The sex of the participants was not included in this study and as such cannot be analyzed. However, one can speculate that the lack of significant results may be a function of sex. Since the majority of the participants in this study reported being in the middleclass, the lack of fit to the model replicates the finding of Thompson and Keith (2002), that there is no relationship between skin color and self-esteem among women who have a more privileged socioeconomic status. The results of this study may have been very different if the sample was heterogeneous in respect to sex.

Fourth, the sample was not random. The participants decided to participate in this study were interested in the topic; therefore, there may have been some selection error involved in the sampling of the population. A source of the sampling error may have come from the lack of variability in the social economic status among the participants.

Approximately 80 percent of the sample identified themselves as middle class. The sample was not representative of the population in ses. It appears that higher ses participants either selected to participant in the study or the places recruited from tended to have higher ses populations. Again, in light of the findings of Thompson and Keith (2002), where ses moderated the relationship between skin color and self-esteem, the high ses of the sample may account for the weak performance of the model.

Future Investigations

The results of the study provide areas for future research and investigations. The model could be tested to determine if it can offer insight into body image issues in African-American female adolescents. The model as theorized, does not accurately describe the relationship between body image and global psychological functioning in adult African-American women. However, since it was developed from a model using adolescents, the next logical step would be to test the model on an adolescent sample. Another area for future inquiry would be to try to determine the relevant factors involved in the relationship of body image and psychological functioning that were not included in this study (e.g., marital status and satisfaction, SES, employment status, job satisfaction, motherhood, social support). This would allow the model to be revised in such that the may help

determine the factors that are salient to adult African-American women. A revised model may encompass the following: the person's skin color may be associated with their level of SES (in terms of levels of education and income), the level of SES may be associated with the person's level of overall life satisfaction (marital status and satisfaction, employment status, job satisfaction, motherhood, social support and role strain), which in turn would influence the person's global psychological functioning (levels of depression, anxiety, stress and self esteem).

Another area for future research is the assessment of the physical characteristics of African-Americans. Given the diversity of skin colors and facial features among African-Americans, the color page and feature sketches were insufficient. The colors of the stimuli employed in this type of research seldom allow for the variety and intensity and color of the participants' skin color. For example, the stimuli should also take in to account the undertone colors (e.g. red, orange, yellow) that helps to influence one's perceptions of skin color.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Cover Letter

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to voluntarily participate in a study of African-American college students' feelings and attitudes about certain topics being conducted by Alicia Hall and Dr. James Epps of the Department of Psychology at University of South Florida.

This study will be conducted at USF and will require one session approximately 60 minutes in length. All data will be coded so that your answers will be confidential and will in no way identify you. You may withdraw at any time and that there will be no penalty of any kind for my voluntary withdrawal.

You may ask additional questions in the future and may request a summary of the results by contacting the project director, Dr. James Epps at the Department of Psychology at 974-2492. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Committee on Institutional Review Board, Department of Psychology, University of South Florida as adequately safeguarding the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights.

Thank you for you participation.

Sincerely,

James Epps, Ph.D
Investigator

Alicia Hall
Investigator

Appendix B

Demographic Form

This questionnaire is designed to obtain background information. Please circle or write the answer corresponding to the appropriate response.

Age: _____

Years of Education:

- Some Highschool - 1
- High-school - 2
- Some College - 3
- College - 4
- Graduate School - 5

Mother's education level:

- Some Highschool - 1
- High-school - 2
- Some College - 3
- College - 4
- Graduate School - 5

Socioeconomic Status

- Lower Class - 1
- Working Class - 2
- Middle Class - 3
- Upper Middle - 4
- Upper Class - 5

Father's education level:

- Some Highschool - 1
- High-school - 2
- Some College - 3
- College - 4
- Graduate School - 5

Ethnicity:

- African-American - 1
- Black - 2
- Haitian-American - 3
- Jamaican-American - 4
- Latina - 5
- Other - 6 Please specify other:

Place of Birth:

City: _____ State: _____ Country:

If you were born in another country how old were you when you moved to the U.S.?

Please rate your skin color:

- Light - 1
- Medium - 2
- Dark - 3

Appendix C

PTS

We are interested in whether or not you have been teased and how this affected you. Write in the number that best indicates your response. First for each question rate how often you think you were teased using the scale provided, never (1) to always (5).

1	2	3	4	5
never	sometimes		always	

Second, unless you answer never to the question, rate how upset you were by the teasing, not upset (1) to very upset (5).

1	2	3	4	5
never	sometimes		always	

 1. Black people made fun of you because you were too dark skinned or too light skinned.

 2. Black people made jokes about your skin color.

 3. Black people called you names like tar baby or high yella heifer.

 4. Black people made fun of you because your nose was too big.

 5. Black people made jokes about your facial features.

 6. Black people commented on your skin color when describing you.

 7. Black people commented about your skin color when you walk into a room.

 8. Black people made fun of you because your lips were too big.

 9. Black people laughed at you because you were wearing bright colors.

 10. Black people laughed at you because you didn't get the joke.

 11. Black people laughed at your hair.

 12. Black people often called you bald headed.

Appendix D

SCS

For the items below rate how often you compare yourself to others. Circle the number that best describes your answer.

1. I find myself thinking about how my nose is different from other black people.

1	2	3	4	5
never	sometimes		always	

2. When I am with black people, I find myself comparing my skin color with theirs.

1	2	3	4	5
never	sometimes		always	

3. I compare my physical appearance with the physical appearance of other black people.

1	2	3	4	5
never	sometimes		always	

4. I compare the attractiveness of my nose with the attractiveness of the noses of other black people.

1	2	3	4	5
never	sometimes		always	

5. I find myself comparing the shape of my lips to the shape of other black people's lips.

1	2	3	4	5
never	sometimes		always	

6. In social situations, I find myself comparing my overall attractiveness to the attractiveness of other black people.

1	2	3	4	5
never	sometimes		always	

Appendix E

PCSS

Please circle the number that best describes your answer.

1. How satisfied are you with the shade (lightness or darkness) of your skin color?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely						Extremely
dissatisfied						satisfied

2. Compared to other African-Americans, I believe my skin color is..

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely						Extremely
light						dark

3. Compared to my family, I believe my skin color is..

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely						Extremely
light						dark

4. If I could change my skin color, I would make it ..

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
much						much
lighter						darker

5. How satisfied are you with the size and shape of your facial features (nose and lips)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely						Extremely
dissatisfied						satisfied

6. Compared to other African-Americans, I believe my facial features are..

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely						Extremely
small						large

7. Compared to my family, I believe my facial features are..

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely						Extremely
small						large

8. If I could change my facial features, I would make them..

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
much						much
smaller						larger

Appendix F

PCAP

View the color palette provided by the researcher and respond to the following questions. Please circle the number that corresponds to the colors you select.

1. Choose the facial skin color that most resembles your facial skin color.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. Choose the facial skin color that you most prefer.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. Choose the skin color that you believe African American men find most attractive.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. Choose the skin color you believe African-American women find most attractive.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. Choose the skin color that you believe is admired in your family.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Appendix F (Continued)

View the features chart provided by the researcher and respond to the following questions. Please circle the number that corresponds to the colors you select.

1. Choose the nose that most resembles your nose.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. Choose the nose that you most prefer.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. Choose the nose that you believe African American men find most attractive.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. Choose the nose that you believe African-American women find most attractive.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. Choose the nose that you believe is admired in your family.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. Choose the lips that most resembles your lips.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7. Choose the lips that you most prefer.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

8. Choose the lips that you believe African American men find most attractive.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. Choose the lips that you believe African-American women find most attractive.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10. Choose the lips that you believe is admired in your family.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Appendix G

RAIS-B

This questionnaire is designed to measure people's social and political attitudes. There are no right or wrong answers. Use the scale below to respond to each statement.

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=uncertain

4=agree

5=strongly agree

1. I believe that being Black is a positive experience.
2. I know through experience what being Black in America means.
3. I felt unable to involve myself in White experiences and am increasing my involvement in Black experiences.
4. I believe that large numbers of Blacks are untrustworthy.
5. I feel an overwhelming attachment to Black people.
6. I involve myself in causes that will help all oppressed people.
7. I feel comfortable wherever I am.
8. I believe that White people look and express themselves better than Blacks.
9. I feel very uncomfortable around Black people.
10. I feel good about being black but do not limit myself to black activities.
11. I often find myself refer to White people as honkies, devils, pigs, etc.
12. I believe to be Black is not necessarily good.
13. I believe that certain aspects of the Black experience apply to me, and others do not.
14. I frequently confront the system and the man.
15. I constantly involve myself in Black political and social activities (art shows, political meetings, Black theater, etc.)
16. I involve myself in social action and political groups even if there are no other Blacks involved.
17. I believe that Black people should learn to think and experience life in ways which are similar to White people.
18. I believe that the world should be interpreted from a Black perspective.
19. I have changed my life style to fit my beliefs about Black people.
20. I feel excitement and joy in Black surroundings.
21. I believe that Black people came from a strange, dark uncivilized continent.
22. People, regardless of their race, have strengths and limitations.

Appendix G (Continued)

23. I find myself reading a lot of Black literature and thinking about being Black.
24. I feel guilty and/or anxious about some of the things I believe about Black people.
25. I believe that a Black person's most effective weapon for solving problems is to become part of the White person's world.
26. I speak my mind regardless of the consequences (e.g. being kicked out of school, being imprisoned, being exposed to danger).
27. I believe that being Black is good, and consequently, I limit myself to Black activities.
28. I am determine to find my Black identity.
29. I believe that White people are intellectually superior to Blacks.
30. I believe that because I am Black, I have many strengths.
31. I feel that Black people do **not** have as much to be proud of as White people do.
32. Most Black people I know are failures.
33. I believe that White people should feel guilty about the way they have treated Blacks in the past.
34. White people can't be trusted.
35. In today's society if Black people don't achieve, they have only themselves to blame.
36. The most important thing about me is that I am Black.
37. Being Black just feels natural to me.
38. Other Black people have trouble accepting me because my life experiences have been so different form their experiences.
39. Black people who have any White people's blood should feel ashamed.
40. Sometimes, I wish I belonged to the White race.
41. The people I respect most are White.
42. A person's race is usually not important to me.
43. I feel anxious when White people compare me to other members of my race.
44. I can't feel comfortable with either Black people or White people.
45. A person's race has little to do with whether he/she is a good person.
46. When I am with Black people, I pretend to enjoy things they enjoy.
47. When a stranger who is Black does something embarrassing in public, I am embarrassed.
48. I believe that a Black person can be close friends with a White person.
49. I am satisfied with myself.
50. I have a positive attitude about myself because I am Black.

Appendix H

EDI-BD

Please record the appropriate answer per item, by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with each item.

1. I think my stomach to big.

1	2	3	4	5	6
always	usually	often	sometimes	rarely	never

2. I think that my thighs or too large.

1	2	3	4	5	6
always	usually	often	sometimes	rarely	never

3. I think that my stomach is just the right size.

1	2	3	4	5	6
always	usually	often	sometimes	rarely	never

4. I feel satisfied with the shape of my body.

1	2	3	4	5	6
always	usually	often	sometimes	rarely	never

5. I like the shape of my buttocks.

1	2	3	4	5	6
always	usually	often	sometimes	rarely	never

6. I think my hips are too big.

1	2	3	4	5	6
always	usually	often	sometimes	rarely	never

7. I think that my thighs are just the right size.

1	2	3	4	5	6
always	usually	often	sometimes	rarely	never

8. I think my buttocks are too large.

1	2	3	4	5	6
always	usually	often	sometimes	rarely	never

9. I think that my hips are just the right size.

1	2	3	4	5	6
always	usually	often	sometimes	rarely	never

Appendix I

RSEI

Please record the appropriate answer per item, by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with each item.

- 1=Strongly agree
- 2=Agree
- 3=Disagree
- 4=Strongly disagree

- ___ 1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- ___ 2. At times I think I am no good at all.
- ___ 3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- ___ 4. I am unable to do things as well as most other people.
- ___ 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- ___ 6. I certainly feel useless at times.
- ___ 7. I feel I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
- ___ 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- ___ 9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
- ___ 10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Appendix J

AAAS-33

Please tell us how much you personally agree or disagree with the beliefs and attitudes listed below by circling a number. There is no right or wrong answer. We want your honest opinion.

1. Most of the music I listen to is by Black artist.
2. I like Black music more than White music.
3. The person I admire most is Black.
4. I listen to Black radio stations.
5. I try to watch all the Black shows on TV.
6. Most of my friends are Black.
7. I believe in the Holy Ghost.
8. I believe in Heaven and Hell.
9. I like gospel music.
10. I am currently a member of a Black church.
11. Prayer can cure disease.
12. The church is the heart of the Black community.
13. I know how to cook chit'lins.
14. I eat chit'lins's once in a while.
15. Sometimes, I cook ham hocks.
16. I know how long you're supposed to cook collard greens.
17. I went to a mostly Black elementary school.
18. I grew up in a mostly black neighborhood.
19. I went to (or go to) a mostly Black high school.
20. I avoid splitting a pole.
21. When the palm of your hand itches, you'll receive some money.
22. There's some truth to many old superstitions.
23. IQ test were set up purposefully to discriminate.
24. Most test (like the SAT and tests to get a job) are set up to make sure that Blacks don't get high scores on them.
25. Deep in their hearts, most White people are racist.
26. I have seen people "fall out".
27. I know what "falling out" means.
28. When I was a child, I used to play tonk.
29. I know how to play bid whist.
30. It's better to try to move your whole family ahead in this world than it is to be out for only yourself.
31. Old people are wise.

Appendix J (Continued)

32. When I was young, my parent(s) sent me to stay with a relative (aunt, uncle, grandmother) for a few weeks then I went back home again.
33. When I was young, I took a bath with my sister, brother or some other relative.

Appendix K

BDI-II

Instructions: This questionnaire consists of 21 groups of statements. Please read each group of statements carefully, and then pick out the one statement in each group that best describes the way you have been feeling during the past two weeks, including today. Circle the number beside the statement you have picked. If several statements in a group seem to apply equally well, circle the highest number for that group. Be sure you do not choose more than one statement for any group, including Item 16 (changes in sleeping pattern) or Item 18 (changes in appetite).

1. Sadness

- 0 I do not feel sad.
- 1 I feel sad much of the time.
- 2 I am sad all the time.
- 3 I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it.

2. Pessimism

- 0 I am not discouraged about my future.
- 1 I feel more discouraged about my future than I used to be.
- 2 I do not expect things to work out for me.
- 3 I feel my future is hopeless and will only get worse.

3. Past Failure

- 0 I do not feel like a failure.
- 1 I have failed more than I should have.
- 2 As I look back, I see a lot of failures.
- 3 I feel I am a total failure as a person.

4. Loss of Pleasure

- 0 I get as much pleasure as I ever did from the things I enjoy.
- 1 I don't enjoy things as much as I used to.
- 2 I get very little pleasure from the things I used to enjoy.
- 3 I can't get any pleasure from the things I used to enjoy.

5. Guilty Feelings

- 0 I don't feel particularly guilty.
- 1 I feel guilty over many things I have done or should have done.
- 2 I feel quite guilty most of the time.
- 3 I feel guilty all of the time.

6. Punishment Feelings

- 0 I do not feel I am being punished.
- 1 I feel I may be punished.
- 2 I expect to be punished.
- 3 I feel I am being punished.

Appendix K (Continued)

7. Self-Dislike

- 0 I feel the same about myself as ever.
- 1 I have lost confidence in myself.
- 2 I am disappointed in myself.
- 3 I dislike myself.

8. Self-Criticalness

- 0 I do not criticize or blame myself more than usual.
- 1 I am more critical of myself than I used to be.
- 2 I criticize myself for all my faults.
- 3 I blame myself for everything bad that happens.

9. Suicidal Thoughts or Wishes

- 0 I do not have any thoughts of killing myself.
- 1 I have thoughts of killing myself, but I would not carry them out.
- 2 I would like to kill myself.
- 3 I would kill myself if I had the chance.

10. Crying

- 0 I do not cry anymore than I used to.
- 1 I cry more than I used to.
- 2 I cry over every little thing.
- 3 I feel like crying, but I can't.

11. Agitation

- 0 I am no more restless or wound up than usual.
- 1 I feel more restless or wound up than usual.
- 2 I am so restless or agitated that it's hard to stay still.
- 3 I am so restless or agitated that I have to keep moving or doing something.

12. Loss of Interest

- 0 I have not lost interest in other people or activities.
- 1 I am less interested in other people or things than before.
- 2 I have lost most of my interest in other people or things.
- 3 It's hard to get interested in anything.

13. Indecisiveness

- 0 I make decisions about as well as ever.
- 1 I find it more difficult to make decisions than usual.
- 2 I have much greater difficulty in making decisions than I used to.
- 3 I have trouble making any decisions.

Appendix K (Continued)

14. Worthlessness

- 0 I do not feel I am worthless.
- 1 I don't consider myself as worthwhile and useful as I used to.
- 2 I feel more worthless as compared to other people.
- 3 I feel utterly worthless.

15. Loss of Energy

- 0 I have as much energy as ever.
- 1 I have less energy than I used to have.
- 2 I don't have enough energy to do very much.
- 3 I don't have enough energy to do anything.

16. Changes in Sleeping Pattern

- 0 I have not experienced any changes in my sleeping pattern.
- 1a I sleep some what more than usual.
- 1b I sleep somewhat less than usual.
- 2a I sleep a lot more than usual.
- 2b I sleep a lot less than usual.
- 3a I sleep most of the day.
- 3b I wake up 1-2 hours early and can't get back to sleep.

17. Irritability

- 0 I am no more irritable than usual.
- 1 I am more irritable than usual.
- 2 I am much more irritable than usual.
- 3 I am irritable all the time.

18. Changes in Appetite

- 0 I have not experienced any changes in my appetite.
- 1a My appetite is somewhat less than usual.
- 1b My appetite somewhat greater than usual.
- 2a My appetite is much less than usual.
- 2b My appetite is much greater than usual.
- 3a I have no appetite at all.
- 3b I crave food all the time.

19. Concentration Difficulty

- 0 I can concentrate as well as ever.
- 1 I can't concentrate as well as usual.
- 2 It's very hard to keep my mind on anything for a very long.
- 3 I find that I can't concentrate on anything.

Appendix K (Continued)

20. Tiredness or Fatigue

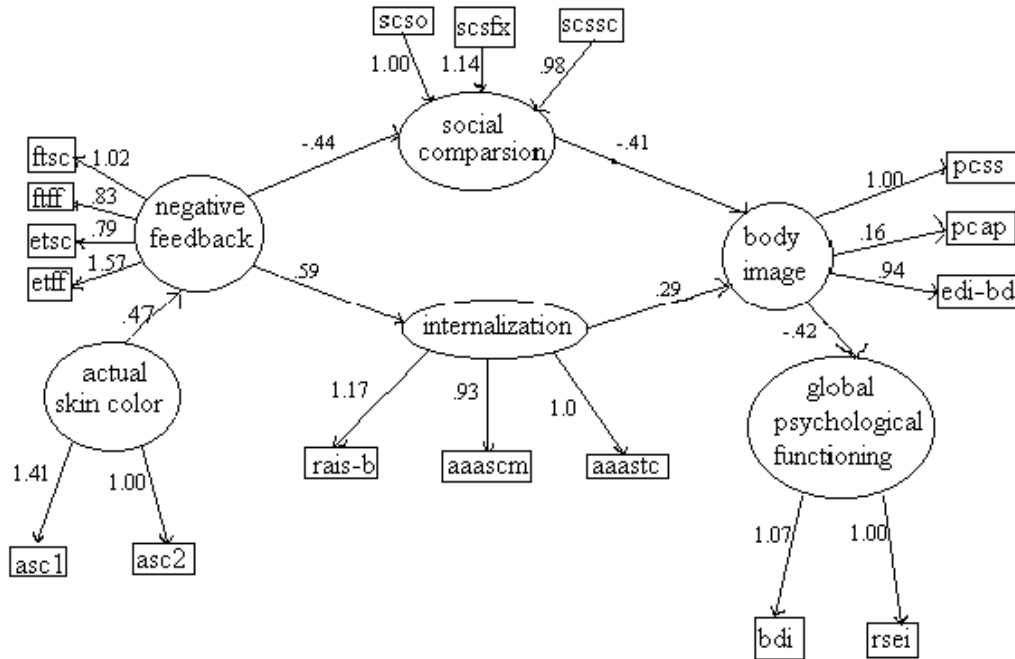
- 0 I am no more tired or fatigued than usual.
- 1 I get more tired or fatigued more easily than usual.
- 2 I am too tired or fatigued to do a lot of the things I used to do.
- 3 I am too tired or fatigued to do most of the things I used to do.

21. Loss of Interest in Sex

- 0 I have not noticed any recent changes in my interest in sex.
- 1 I am less interested in sex than I used to be.
- 2 I am much less interested in sex now.
- 3 I have lost interest in sex completely.

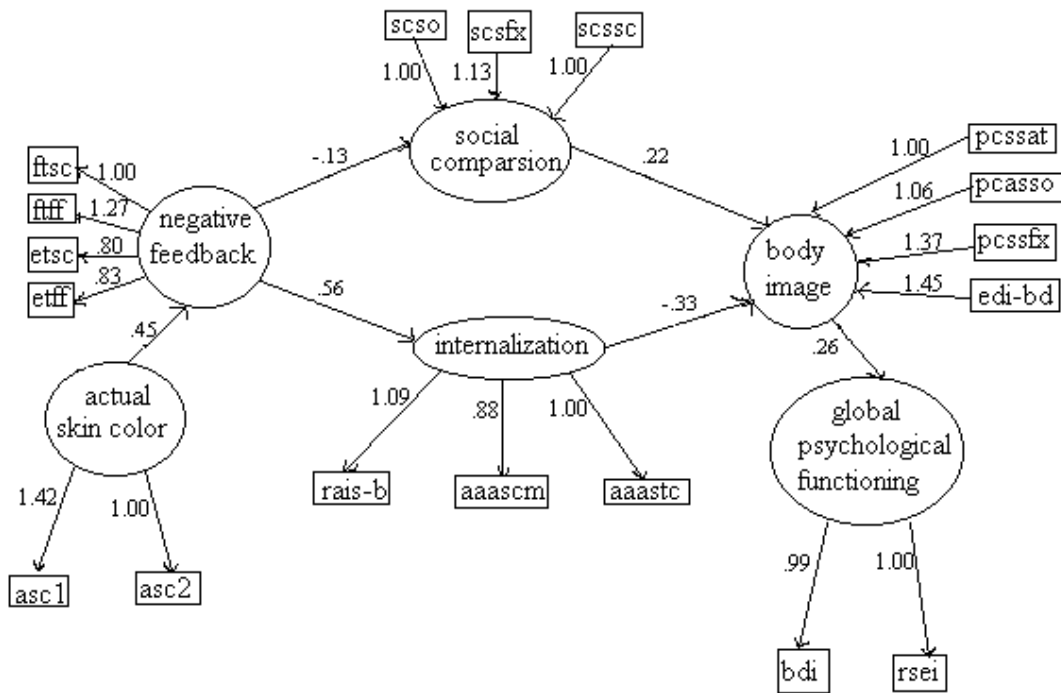
Appendix L

Figure 2: Covariance structure modeling analysis of hypothesized theoretical model



Appendix M

Figure 3: Covariance structure modeling analysis of revised hypothesized model



About the Author

Alicia V. Hall is the eldest of three children and the aunt of a niece and two nephews. She was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. Education has always been important to Ms. Hall. She attended high school at Hathaway Brown School for girls in Shaker Heights Ohio. She received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from Lafayette College and her Master's from Indiana State University.

Ms. Hall is currently employed at the University of South Carolina, School of Medicine in the Department of Neuropsychiatry, where she works on a NIH funded grant on the genetics of Autism and Asperger's. She plans to continue working in research and providing clinical services to children and families.