“Dark-Skinned People Be Like”
How Colorism-Promoting Internet Memes and Audience Feedback Influence African Americans’ Intragroup Attitude and Perception of Skin – Tone Bias

THESIS

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Abstract

This study aimed to understand the role of positive and negative feedback on attitude, behavioral intention and shared reality. Through the lens of the social cognitive theory (SCT), grounding theory, social identity theory (SIT) and social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE), the study focused on memes that portrayed colorism (i.e., intragroup discrimination). African American participants viewed a meme portraying dark-skinned Blacks as poor on Twitter that received negative or positive feedback through comments and emoticons. Overall, participants who viewed memes receiving positive feedback reported more negative attitudes towards sharing the meme. Furthermore, when the meme received positive feedback, participants reported less identification with the commenter. Although the study provided a glimpse into colorism within social media, skewed data hinder external validity. Future research will address this issue.
Dedication

Dedicated in memory of Kennedy Jordan Gibson
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Internet serves as a platform for disseminating information, without restrictions of boundaries or location. Through the evolving capability of the Internet, Web 2.0 software affords every user the ability to co-create information available online. Exemplar sites that utilize Web 2.0 software are social media. Social media platforms afford users the unique experience of not only sharing, but also co-creating information within the website. This allows for users to share information about aspects of their personal opinions to larger audiences without limitations to physical boundaries (boyd & Ellison, 2008; Walther et al., 2011)

The participatory culture of social media (i.e., the ability to co-create information) encourages the sharing and creating of media (Jenkins, 2009). This includes the use of memes. Memes were first defined by Richard Dawkins and were conceptualized through applying the theory of evolution to cultural change (Shifman, 2013a). The evolutionary perspective of culture describes memes as a cultural unit or idea that is spread throughout society through replication or imitation. Cultural ideas that are considered memes include images, slogans, catch phrases, videos, etc. (Shifman, 2013a; Wiggins & Bowers, 2014). As it pertains to Internet memes, the platform allows for more ‘spreadability’, which aids in understanding the spread of culture within an online setting. Internet memes are not simply passed from user to user, but they are also modified or remixed, all the while leaving the original cultural concept intact. Essentially, cultural information shared
Internet memes are capable of becoming shared social phenomenon, are duplicated through imitation (e.g., forwarding, sharing or editing), and are disseminated through competition and selection (e.g., ability to relate to current events or to adapt to the current sociocultural environment) (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Shifman, 2013a).

Memes, as a genre, serve the purpose of continuing ongoing social and cultural discourse within a social system (Wiggins & Bowers, 2014). Since Internet memes are capable of influencing social discourse and social phenomena, it may have pernicious influences if the meme displays negative content. For example, a popular Internet meme disseminated through social media displays the content\(^1\) of *skin-tone bias* in the form\(^2\) of a photo accompanied with the text, “Dark-skinned people be like” (or a derivative of the text).

Within the participatory culture of the Internet, memes of this nature are spread through sharing or reproduction. Through this dissemination, these memes may also influence the construction of group identity and social boundaries (Shifman, 2013b). This work will examine *skin-tone bias* within social media (i.e., Twitter) utilizing negative memes targeting dark-skinned African Americans. Through the lens of the social cognitive theory (SCT), grounding theory, social identity theory (SIT) and social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE), this study will address whether positive reinforcement on negative memes models the behavior for the viewer (e.g., posting the

\(^1\) Content is a dimension of a cultural idea. The concept refers to an idea or ideology depicted by the text (see Shifman, 2013).

\(^2\) Form is a dimension of a cultural idea. The concept refers to the physical appearance of the message (e.g., visual or audible dimensions) (see Shifman, 2013).
meme), as well as establishes a social consensus endorsing the stereotype presented in the meme. Understanding this behavior within social media is integral not only for understanding the social influence of memes, but also for understanding how this influence is capable of perpetrating negative beliefs that are harmful to an entire culture.
Black identity is a complex concept because it encompasses aspects of culture, values, racial identity and skin-tone (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). The emphasis of skin-tone within the United States is a result of the artificial subgrouping of Blacks on the basis of skin-tone (Maddox, 2004; Russell et al., 1992). The practice of differentiating Blacks based on skin-tone has various terms including colorism (Hunter, 2007), skin color bias (Hall, 1998) and skin tone bias (Maddox & Chase, 2004). Essentially, these terms can all be understood as the practice of preferring or disadvantaging an individual because of their phenotypic characteristics (Maddox, 2004).

The practice of separating Blacks on the basis of skin-tone originated during slavery. In order to create a cast system differentiating African slaves, color lines based on skin-tone were formed, and rules for these differentiations were established (Horowitz, 1973). Within this system, lighter skinned Blacks were afforded more opportunities than darker skinned Blacks. For instance, light-skinned Blacks were allowed to possess more duties and resources, as well as work indoors with their White slave owners (Wilder, 2010). This work included more desired tasks like driver, valet, cook and housekeeper (Russell et al., 1992). Dark-skinned Blacks, however, were required to complete more physically tasking jobs within the field (Wilder, 2010).
Whites preferred light-skinned Blacks because their fair skin demonstrated White ancestry. Although they were still considered Black, light-skinned Blacks were considered to be more superior, intelligent and capable than their dark-skinned counterparts (Russell et al., 1992).

According to the “one-drop rule” used to establish racial identity in the United States, people were considered to be Black if they contained any level of African ancestry (Russell et al., 1992). Consequently, distinct labels were utilized to establish the amount of African ancestry the person possessed (Wilder, 2010). For example, the term *mulatto* was used to describe light-skinned Blacks with three eighths of African ancestry (Bodenhorn, 2006; Horowitz, 1973; Wilder, 2010).

Following the abolition of slavery, both intergroup and intragroup discrimination based on skin-tone remained prevalent. Lighter skin afforded Blacks preference among Whites for education and economic opportunities (Keith & Herring, 1991; Russell et al., 1992). This resulted in light-skinned Blacks working to maintain their status by only socializing and disproportionately marrying other light-skinned Blacks (Bodenhorn, 2006; Wilder, 2010). Light-skinned Blacks also excluded dark-skinned Blacks from social clubs, churches and schools (Russell et al., 1992). For instance, elite social clubs like the Blue Vein Society of Nashville, excluded members on the basis of skin-tone, rather than other characteristics like status or family background. Often, to exclude Blacks, new members were required to pass the “paper-bag test” where their skin-tone must be lighter than a brown paper bag to be considered light (Russell et al., 1992).
Differentiations between light and dark skinned African Americans have created long lasting implications. Biases based on skin-tone lead many academic administrators at Black colleges to believe that it was wasteful to educate darker Blacks under the premise that they would never be accepted within higher prestige occupations. Consequently, light-skinned Blacks were usually educated in the liberal arts, while dark-skinned Blacks who attended university received vocational or industrial training. This training essentially funneled dark-skinned Blacks to lower paying jobs (Russell et al., 1992).

Additionally, skin-tone remains to be associated with lower socioeconomic status, educational attainment, perception of criminality and perceptions of beauty (Dixon & Maddox, 2005; Keith & Herring, 1991; Maddox & Gray, 2002). For instance, dark-skinned Black women have lower self-esteem and are considered less attractive when compared to their lighter counterparts (Hall, 1998; Thompson & Keith, 2001). As it relates to education, skin-tone memory bias exists. When primed with counter-stereotypical concept of a Black male (i.e., educated), the participants remembered the male as having a lighter complexion (Ben-Zeev, Dennehy, Goodrich, Kolarik, & Geisler, 2014).

Skin-tone also causes differentiation within the media. When exposed to news media depicting Blacks as the perpetrator, heavy news viewers experienced more emotional concern when the perpetrator was a dark-skinned Black, as opposed to White (Dixon & Maddox, 2005). Also popular rap videos are more likely to feature females with light-skin (Conrad, Dixon, & Zhang, 2009).
Maddox (2004) posits that preference for lighter-skinned Blacks may be a direct result of their phenotypic features. Within the Unites States, ideal beauty is based on that of European features (e.g., lighter skin, straight hair, thin lips), which, for Blacks, is more closely related to that of light-skinned Blacks (Maddox, 2004, p. 383). Consequently, deviation from this standard (i.e., dark-skinned Blacks) may prove detrimental.

Furthermore, when stereotypes are assigned to racial groups, that stereotype is applied to the “prototype” of the racial group and viewed through this conceptual lens. When Blacks fit the prototypical African American (i.e., darker skin) they are more strongly associated with the negative stereotypes associated with the racial group (Maddox, 2004). Since dark-skin is associated with more negative stereotypes, focus will be placed on this subgroup.

**Social Cognitive Theory**

According to social cognitive theory (SCT), people are not merely passive, but instead, actively engaging with their environment; anticipating, regulating and purposefully behaving (Bandura, 2001). Furthermore, behavior is motivated or guided by the desire to gain preferred outcomes (Bandura & Locke, 2003). This overarching concept is understood as agency.

Motivation is an important concept within SCT because it serves as a regulatory mechanism. Motivation can be biologically based, socially based or cognitive based (Bandura, 1991). Specifically, socially based motivators occur through social incentives. Social reactions act as an incentive for behavior and these reactions refer to the rewarding or punishing consequences of behavior. Essentially, people are motivated to gain
approval or positive reactions in order to avoid discomfort from a negative outcome (e.g., physical punishment, ostracism, loss) (Bandura, 1991). In concert with the agency perspective of SCT, this motivation does not merely act as a reaction to behavior, but is capable of also predicting behavior. This means that people are capable of anticipating specific outcomes and conduct themselves in a manner that avoids undesired outcomes.

According to the SCT, awareness of the possible outcomes of behavior does not simply occur through direct experience, but individuals are capable of observational or vicarious learning (Bandura, 2001). Through this process, people observe the actions of others and the consequences of that behavior (Bandura, 2002). This observation can serve as motivation or deterrence for the same behavior, by allowing the viewer to anticipate the possible consequences for engaging in similar behavior (Bandura, 1991).

This concept of motivation through vicarious learning has been applied to risky sex behavior (see Nabi & Clark, 2008), sexual history discussion (see Moye-Gusé, Chung, & Jain, 2011), health behavior modeling through virtual immersion (Fox & Bailenson, 2009) and gender development (see Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

**Social Media**

The modeling of behavior as posited within the SCT can occur in a variety of communication environments. This research will focus on the modeling of behavior within social media.

Social networking sites (SNS) first emerged in 1997, creating a site allowing for the ability to establish a profile within an online boundary, list other users in which a connection is shared and view connections made between other users (boyd & Ellison,
2008). Unlike previous sites within the Internet, SNS utilized the Web 2.0 structure of the Internet, allowing users to co-create information (Walther et al., 2011). This nature of the site established an online participatory culture, where users are encouraged to share and co-create media (Jenkins, 2009).

One method for engaging in the online participatory culture is through the use of Internet memes. Memes are cultural concepts or ideas spread from person to person (Wiggins & Bowers, 2014). Memes allow for cultural production within social media and the participatory culture within social media motivate the continuation of the meme culture. Essentially, users of social media are driven to participate in the sharing or creation of popular memes by economically driven logic (e.g., attention), social logic or cultural and esthetic logic (e.g., shaping cultural norms) (Shifman, 2011).

When using social media, users are not only capable of viewing information shared by other users, but the platform also allows for exposure to elements of the consequences resulting from sharing the information (e.g., comments, likes or number of views). Furthermore, exposure to media within social media is not limited to close counterparts, but it may be viewed by a number of people, including casual browsers, mutual friends or anonymous others. This capability, defined as masspersonal communication, understands that social media blurs the concept of mass and interpersonal communication (Walther et al., 2011).

The SCT posits that vicarious learning occurs when individuals view the behavior of others that results in reward or punishment (Bandura, 2002). The consequences of their behavior may motivate or discourage the observer from engaging in the modeled
behavior. Within social media, rewards or punishments for behavior can be in the form of feedback provided through comments or likes. This implies that when meme posts receive positive feedback, regardless of its’ negativity, the viewer may develop an attitude in agreement with the content of the meme. Furthermore, positive feedback may also serve as motivation to engage in the modeled posting behavior. This leads to the following predictions:

H1a: Participants who view a meme that receives positively valenced comments and emoticons will have a more positive attitude toward skin tone bias than participants who view a meme that receives negatively valenced comments and emoticons.

H1b: Participants who view a meme that receives positively valenced comments and emoticons will report a greater behavioral intention to share a similar post than participants who view a meme that receives negatively valenced comments and emoticons.

Grounding, Common Ground and Shared Reality

Through communication, information is shared. Communicative interactions do not simply allow for the exchange of information, but the information is capable of containing meaning (see Fiedler, 2008). In addition, communication serves as means for transmitting cultural meaning (Kashima, 2014). Meanings (i.e., ideas or practices) allow for the ability to have knowledge of an idea or practice, in addition to valuing the information (e.g., norms, ranking, evaluating, etc.) (Kashima, 2014). The process of translating information to meaning occurs through the process of grounding (Kashima,
Klein, & Clark, 2007). The process of grounding allows for a concept to be mutually understood and sufficiently accepted for the current purpose of a joint activity (Kashima, 2014). Once information is transformed into meaning through the process of grounding, it becomes common ground (Kashima et al., 2007). The requirements for common ground are that: (1) The meanings are mutually believed and taken for granted by participants of the joint activity (collective identity) and (2) The meanings are mutually accepted and taken for granted by the participants (collective representation) (Kashima, 2014, p. 84).

Common ground is not a generic result of grounding, but instead different forms of a common ground can occur. Common ground can be characterized as personal common ground, which describes mutuality acquired through a joint conversational experience. Communal common ground, however, describes mutually believed to be universally held within the community in which the joint actors belong (H. H. Clark, 1996). For example, if two students were conversing about the difficulty of their course, personal common ground would allow the students to infer common ground between each other, as a result of their personal experience from the conversation (e.g., agreeing that the course is difficult). However, the students may establish communal common ground if they believe that other students enrolled in the course share their sentiment, even though other students are not involved in the conversation.

Generally, meaning considered common ground is not stagnant. Instead, the meaning occurs through multiple dimensions: spatial, temporal or social. Personal common ground is spatial (i.e., generalized to the context) or temporal (i.e., generalized
to the new joint activity). If the two hypothetical students from above were to meet again, they may either generalize the context (i.e., the two students conversing) or generalize the fact that they have a new joint activity. On the other hand, *communal common ground* contains both spatial and temporal dimensions, in addition to a social dimension. This social dimension allows for meaning to be generalized to a broader group of people (Kashima, 2014). People are not aware of this generalization, but instead, it is primed when a new context makes the memories associated with the context is which the meaning was grounded salient (Kashima, 2014).

The concept of *common ground* is synonymous with the concept of *shared reality*. Meaning is considered a *shared reality* to the extent that it is understood as valid or real and shared with others (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). This emphasizes the interplay between cognition and social activity (see Higgins, 2000). People are motivated to establish a *shared reality* in order to experience “commonality of inner states about the world” (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine, 2009, p. 498). Echterhoff et al. (2009) describe four factors that underlie *shared reality*. The first condition acknowledges that ‘inner states’ are not merely understood through overt behavior, but instead, people naturally infer the beliefs or attitudes of others from their behavior. According to the second condition, *shared reality* cannot occur unless it is in reference to a target. For instance, in the example of the two students conversing about the difficulty of their course, the target of their *shared reality* is their course. The third condition states that the result of a *social reality* cannot be separated from the process in which it occurs (specifically as it relates to motivation for establishing a *social reality*). Motivation may be either epistemic (e.g.,
need to achieve a valid or reliable understanding of the world) or relational (e.g., need to feel connected with others), but if someone attempts to agree with the inner state of someone else for ulterior motives, a social reality is not actually established. For instance, if the student only agrees that the course is difficult in order to gain answers from the student, there is no true connection between inner states. This concept leads to the last condition of shared reality; the participants of the interaction must have a successful connection to the other’s inner state (i.e., awareness of commonality) (Echterhoff et al., 2009).

People rely on interactions to aid in navigating the social world around them. This motivates the process of grounding information into meaning in order to establish a common ground or shared reality. Various concepts are capable of being transformed into meaning, but this study will focus on stereotypes. Stereotypes are defined as common or mutually held beliefs by individuals regarding a social group and its’ members (Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996). As discussed previously, communication is integral to the process of establishing a common ground or shared reality. When stereotypes are communicated, there is a bias towards sharing stereotype-consistent information (Lyons & Kashima, 2001). Furthermore, this stereotype-consistent bias increases when stereotypical information is shared or known by others within an interaction (Lyons & Kashima, 2003). Not only do people take into account their audience’s knowledge, but people also consider their audience’s attitude. In a study where participants were made aware of the valence of their audience’s attitude of the referent (i.e., positive or negative), participants
significantly shared information congruent with the audience’s attitude (Higgins, Echterhoff, Crespillo, & Kopietz, 2007).

Clark & Kashima (2007) demonstrated that stereotype-consistent information (i.e., when the stereotypical information provided was congruent with the stereotype associated with the referent) is considered to be more communicable than stereotype-inconsistent information, and stereotype-consistent information is perceived as socially connective. Additionally, when perceived endorsement of the stereotype was high, there was a significant stereotype consistency bias (A. E. Clark & Kashima, 2007). Through a path model, this study demonstrated that the effect of perceived stereotype endorsement and stereotype-consistent information on communication is mediated by social connectivity and communicability. Essentially, when a concept is perceived as being endorsed by others and the information is stereotype-consistent, it increases in the degree to which it is considered socially connective. This, in turn, increases communicability, which is positively related to actual communication (A. E. Clark & Kashima, 2007). Lastly, through communication of stereotype-consistent information, a greater social consensus of the stereotype is formed (Smith & Postmes, 2011). Consequently, the following are predicted:

H2: Participants who view a meme that receives positively valenced comments and emoticons will be more likely to endorse stereotypes associated with dark-skin Blacks than participants who view memes that receives negatively valenced comments and emoticons.
H3: Participants who view a meme that receives positively valenced comments and emoticons will be more willing to disseminate the meme than participants who view a meme that receives negatively valenced comments and emoticons.

**Social Identity**

Cognitive and social aspects of interactions are both integral in forming an interpretation of the situation. Consequently, it is also necessary to understand the role of *social identity* in the response (e.g., attitude or belief) to negative, stereotype-consistent information. *Social identity* is understood as an aggregate of social categories that individuals consider themselves to belong (Turner, 1982). These social categories help establish self-concept and allow for the experience of shared emotions within the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1982).

Since social identity is comprised of different groups in which someone belongs, one must rely on situational cues to trigger specific identities. When an identity is most salient, people view the social situation through that identity. Social identity enables the regulation of behavior because individuals attribute specific behavioral norms and stereotypes to the group, by which they are expected to abide. Consequently, when membership to this group is salient, the individual will conduct their behavior to manner that conforms to the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This insures that behavior is appropriate for the context of the situation (Turner, 1982). However, when the individual believes someone to be a member of an out-group, the individual’s behavior will be bias towards the in-group in order to promote positive in-group evaluations (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).
The Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) elaborates on the relationship between group identity and individual behavior. SIDE posits that, when group identification is salient, people will neglect their personal identity, favoring the behavior of the group (Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995; Turner, 1982). Through this process, those within a group will be *deindividuated*, shifting their identity to that of the group (e.g., *we* vs. *they*, instead of *I* vs. *you*) (Reicher et al., 1995).

During face-to-face contact, group identification is more accessible, as one can distinguish whether others are in-group or out-group members. However, during computer-mediated communication (CMC), such as social media, the identification of other users and group boundaries can be ambiguous. This can disrupt the deindividuation process, making it difficult to understand the social environment and thus, conformity to social norms (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998). In this case, when will people act in accordance with their personal identity, instead of shifting towards their social identity within a group? When there is an awareness or perception of another CMC user as an in-group member, their behavior shifted towards that of group norms. However, when in isolation, behavior shifts away from group norms. Consequently, the saliency of social identity cues is key in determining when group identity will influence behavior.

For African Americans, social identity can encompass categorical associations with skin tone and identification with their racial group.

**Skin-tone.** Context cues (e.g., situational accessibility) are capable of activating distinction based on skin tone, thus making skin tone more salient (Maddox, 2004;
Maddox & Chase, 2004). For example, more significance is placed on skin tone within predominantly Black colleges than at predominantly White institutions (Harvey, LaBeach, Pridgen, & Gocial, 2005). Consequently, intragroup interaction may increase the saliency of skin-tone for African Americans. This saliency is capable of causing Blacks to view and process information through this lens.

Racial Identity. Identity lies at the core of self-concept. For African Americans, race plays an important role in identity, as they have characterized by race within the United States for many years (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). However, race is not the sole identity that African Americans attribute to their self-concept. Consequently, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) conceptualizes racial identity as the amount of significance and meaning that is given to race by African Americans (Sellers et al., 1998). The MMRI assumes that racial identity is both stable and influenced by situations, apart of a hierarchy of identities, and that there are individual differences between African Americans as it relates to the importance of race their attribute to their identity (Sellers et al., 1998).

This model includes four dimensions, which conceptualize how African Americans define themselves and how they ascribe to membership in their racial group. These four dimensions are salience, centrality, ideology and regard. For this study, focus will be placed on the centrality aspect of racial identity.

According to the MMRI, centrality refers to the extent that a person defines himself or herself as it relates to race. Essentially, this measures whether race is at the core of an African Americans’ identity (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith,
Furthermore, centrality is relatively stable regardless of the situation (Sellers et al., 1998). Understanding the extent to which race is an important aspect of an African American’s identity, is not only important to understand how their racial identity relates to other parts of their identity, but it also allows for understanding their selection of or exposure to media. For example, *ethnic identity* is significantly correlated with television avoidance ($r = .42, p < .000$) (Abrams & Giles, 2007). This demonstrates that African Americans with a strong identity rooted in their ethnicity will avoid or be critical of media that is contradictory to their self-concept. Although ethnic identity has some theoretical differences from racial identity as proposed by the MMRI (e.g., the development of identity over time), the relationship between identity and media may be the same, as both constructs conceptualize the importance African Americans ascribe to being a member of their group.
Chapter 3: Method

Participants and Design

Participants (N = 168) were African American twitter users, age 18 to 46 (M = 29.73, SD = 7.45) recruited through an online panel management company in the United States. The participants received compensation for their participation in the experiment. The experiment was a 2 (source cue of the commenter: light-skin vs. dark-skin) x 2 (positive feedback vs. negative feedback) between-subjects design, with participants randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions. In addition, gender was balanced between the four conditions (male, n = 84; female, n = 84).

Procedure

In order to prevent socially desirable responses, participants were instructed that they were completing a study to understand how people process social media posts on twitter. The terms colorism and skin-tone bias were excluded from the initial instructions. Following the completion of the study, participants were debriefed and informed that the research aimed to study positive and negative feedback on social media posts portraying skin-tone bias or colorism within the African-American community.

Stimuli

When addressing stereotypes believed to be associated with skin-tone, African Americans associated both dark-skin males (p < .05) and dark-skin females (p < .0001)
with poverty significantly more than their light-skin counterparts (see Maddox & Gray, 2002). Consequently, the stimuli portrayed the stereotype of poverty associated with dark-skin Blacks. The meme selected for the stimuli through the process of pre-testing a pool of African American participants separate from the study. Participants were shown five memes negatively associating African American males with poverty. Participants responded to 7-items on a 1 (very poorly) to 7 (very well) scale, rating how well the adjectives listed described the meme. Items included the adjectives funny, amusing, humorous, mean, hurtful, offensive, humiliating. In addition, participants responded to a 3-item measure, assessing the level of meanness or malice associated with the meme. These 3-items were measured on a 7-point likert scale with 1 being not at all and 7 being very much. Items included, “To what extend do you think the content of the meme derogates or ‘puts down’ dark-skinned Blacks?”, “To what extent do you think the content of the meme negatively stereotypes dark-skinned Blacks” and “To what extent do you think the content of the meme makes fun of dark-skinned Blacks?”.

The meme selected for the study, produced a negative correlation, $r (9) = -.92$, $p < .01$ when comparing the total response to humor adjectives versus the meanness adjectives. Further responses to the 3-item scale measuring the level of meanness or malice associated with the meme received the highest mean ratings, ($M = 6.08$, SD = 1.62, $M = 6.36$, SD = 1.50 and $M = 6.42$, SD = 1.44). However, there was no significant difference in responses to other memes viewed by participants.

Within the qualtrics interface, participants viewed a mock Twitter post in which the fictional users posted an Internet meme. The meme depicted of a Black male with the
phrase, “Dark-skinned Blacks be like... can I borrow a dollar”. The profile of fictional Twitter user was controlled for each condition by using the default picture assigned by the twitter interface and a unisex name (i.e., Taylor Brown). This prevented any additional manipulation based on the skin-tone or gender of the owner of the fictional Twitter page.

Each twitter post received four comments from fictional twitter users and the comments presented either positive or negative feedback for the meme. Positively valenced feedback was written to endorse, like and, agree with the meme, and included positive emoticons. Sample comments included “haha that’s so true” and “I couldn’t agree more”. Sample emoticons include a ‘smiling face’ and ‘thumbs up’. Negatively valenced feedback disliked and disagreed with the meme. Sample comments included “wrong on too many levels!” and “absolutely disagree”. Sample emoticons include a ‘mad face’ and ‘thumbs down’. The length of the comments for both positive and negative feedback were held constant. In addition, the names of the users shown as commenting on the twitter post were held constant for each condition. The source cue (i.e., skin-tone of the commenter) was manipulated by altering the skin-tone of the profile picture for the user to portray them as having a light or dark complexion. The original photo source was held constant for each condition, so as to not create any confounds (e.g., attractiveness of the commenter).
Dependent Measures

Affect

Affect was measured using a 36-item, 11 point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 11 (*extremely*). Participants were asked to rate how the presented adjectives described how the meme made them feel (i.e., emotion). Sample adjectives include ‘cheerful’, ‘scared’ and ‘upset’.

Attitude

Attitude was assessed using various methods in order to measure different aspects of attitude within the study. These aspects included attitude towards the meme and attitude towards the behavior of sharing the meme.

Participants’ attitude of the meme depicted on the Twitter post was assessed using a 10-item, 7-point scale where participants were asked to rate how adjectives described the meme. Sample items included ‘funny’, ‘amusing’, ‘mean’ and ‘rude’.

Participants’ attitude of sharing the meme was assessed using a 5-item, 7-point semantic differential scale where participants were asked to rate sharing the meme on Twitter. The scale will use polar adjectives *bad-good, wrong-right, foolish-wise, harmful-harmless, not acceptable-acceptable*.

Behavioral Intention

Behavioral intention was measured to predict whether the person would engage in the modeled behavior (i.e., posting media portraying colorism). Behavioral intention was assessed by asking participants to indicate their likelihood of posting a tweet criticizing or endorsing skin-tone bias. The measure utilized 6-items on a 1 (*not at all likely*) to 7
Sample items included, ‘Posting a tweet that criticizes negative stereotyping of dark-skinned Blacks’ and ‘Posting a tweet that endorses negative stereotyping of dark-skinned Blacks’.

Additional items accessing whether the participant would retweet the meme or favorite the meme within a Twitter interface was also included.

Social Reality

As discussed previously, common ground or shared reality occur when a concept is understood as valid and this belief is shared with others during a joint activity (Echterhoff et al., 2009; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). When stereotypes are shared in common with others, stereotype-consistency bias occurs (A. E. Clark & Kashima, 2007; Lyons & Kashima, 2001, 2003). Consequently, shared reality will include measures assessing agreement with stereotypes relating to dark-skin African Americans on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale (see Dixon, 2006). Sample items included, ‘Dark-skinned Blacks tend to be lazier than light-skinned Blacks’ and ‘Dark-skinned Blacks tend to be less attractive than light-skinned Blacks’. These statements were based on stereotypes found to be significantly (p < .05) associated with dark-skinned Blacks by other African Americans (see Maddox & Gray, 2002).

According to the spiral of silence theory, people have a tendency to only express public opinion in fear of retaliation or negative consequences for expressing any opposing opinions (Noelle- Neumann, 1974). This causes individuals who agree with the majority opinion to speak up, while those with other opinions become silent, creating a spiral that establishes the popular opinion as the prevailing one. Furthermore, the
dominant opinion motivates people to comply, as they are able to avoid isolation from the
majority (Noelle- Neumann, 1974). Items measured willingness to express opinions
about negative stereotypes of dark-skinned Blacks in various situations. These items
included ‘In a television interview’, ‘In a conversation with your friends’, ‘In a
conversation with your work colleagues’, ‘Through a private message through your
Twitter page’, and ‘Through a public tweet on your Twitter page’ (see Kim, Kim, & Oh,
2014). The items utilized a 7-point scale from 1 (not at all willing) to 7 (very willing).

In addition, the study measured the perception of the prevalence of colorism
within the Black community. Participants indicated the percentage of Blacks that had the
listed beliefs from 1 to 100. Sample items included, ‘Percentage of Blacks in the United
States that believe dark-skinned Blacks are lazier than light-skinned Blacks’ and
‘Percentage of Blacks that believe dark-skinned Blacks are poorer than light-skinned
Blacks’.

**Moderators**

*Racial Identity*

Identity was assessed using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity
(MIBI), which is a measure based on the MMRI. Centrality was measured using 8-items
from the MIBI ($\alpha = .77$) on a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly
agree).

*Skin Tone Identity*
Skin tone was assessed by asking participants to indicate their skin tone on a 5-point scale from 1 (very light-skinned) to 5 (very dark-skinned) (see Maxwell, Brevard, Abrams, & Belgrave, 2014).
Chapter 4: Results

Manipulation Check

A manipulation check was utilized to determine if participants could indicate the skin-tone of the Twitter users who commented on the meme, and whether the comments were in agreement or disagreement with the meme. Thirty-six participants who did not successfully respond to these manipulation checks were excluded from further analysis.

Affect

Principal-components analysis was performed on the 36-item measure of affect. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .923, and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance ($p < .05$). Principal-components analysis yielded five components with eigenvalues greater than 1, explaining 50%, 11.54%, 4.98%, 3.61% and 3.2% of the variance respectively. Furthermore, obliman rotation was utilized. A scree plot revealed that component 1 explained the majority of variance, with the amount of variance explained decreasing after a component 2. Consequently, an additional principal-components analysis was conducted, extracting a fixed number of two factors, explaining 47.19% and 10.77% of the variance respectively. The factors were considered to represent disdain and content. A two-way ANOVA for both disdain and content did not demonstrate any significant effects.
**Attitude**

The sum of responses to the attitude measure ($\alpha = .952$) was treated as a single unit of analysis. Analysis of this variable revealed a positively skewed distribution ($M = 6.93$, $SD = 4.92$), with the minimum response accounting for 76.6% of valid responses. Consequently, this measure was transformed by using the common logarithm (LOG 10) of the responses to the measure. The transformed results were used for further analysis.

Hypothesis 1a predicted that participants who viewed a meme receiving positively valenced comments and emoticons would have a more positive attitude toward *skin tone bias* (i.e., negatively stereotyping dark-skinned Blacks) than participants who viewed a meme receiving negatively valenced comments and emoticons. A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) demonstrated a significant main effect for feedback, $F(1, 124) = 4.32, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.03$. Participants exposed to the Twitter post receiving negative feedback reported a more positive attitude ($M = 0.82$, $SD = 0.23$) towards skin-tone bias than participants exposed to positive feedback ($M = 0.75$, $SD = 0.13$). Although the main effect of feedback was significant, the direction of attitudes reported is opposite the prediction. Consequently, Hypothesis 1a was not supported.

Attitude was also assessed by measuring the participants rating of the meme. The items were separated into two measures, *humor* and *hurtful*. The humor measure ($\alpha = .931$) was treated as a single unit of analysis. Analysis of this variable revealed a positively skewed distribution ($M = 9.39$, $SD = 6.76$), with the minimum response accounting for 56.3% of valid responses. Consequently, the responses to the measure were transformed by using the common logarithm (LOG 10) of the responses to the
measure. The transformed results were used for further analysis. A two-way ANOVA demonstrated an interaction approaching significance, $F(1, 124) = 3.814, p = .053, \eta^2 = .03$. Participants who viewed the meme positively reinforced by dark-skinned Blacks, viewed the meme as more humorous ($M = 0.97, SD = 0.30$) than other participants.

The hurt measure ($\alpha = .879$) was treated as a single unit of analysis. A two-way ANOVA did not demonstrate any significant effects.

**Behavioral Intention**

The sum of responses to the behavioral intention measure ($\alpha = .502$) was treated as a single unit of analysis, with reversed items recoded to the same direction of the other items. Hypothesis 1b predicted that participants who viewed a meme receiving positively valenced comments and emoticons would report a greater behavioral intention to share a similar post than participants who viewed a meme receiving negatively valenced comments and emoticons. A two-way ANOVA did not demonstrate any significant effects.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that participants who viewed a meme receiving positively valenced comments and emoticons would be more willing to disseminate the meme than participants who viewed a meme that receiving negatively valenced comments and emoticons. Analysis of this variable revealed a positively skewed distribution ($M = 1.68, SD = 1.76$), with the minimum response accounting for 82.8% of valid responses. Consequently, the responses to the measure were transformed by using the common logarithm (LOG 10) of the responses to the measure. The transformed results were used for further analysis. A two-way ANOVA did not demonstrate any significant effects.
Shared Reality

The sum of responses to the stereotype endorsement measure (α = .961) was treated as a single unit of analysis. Analysis of this variable revealed a positively skewed distribution (M = 15.50, SD = 10.83), with the minimum response accounting for 48.4% of valid responses. Consequently, the responses to the measure were transformed by using the common logarithm (LOG 10) of the responses to the measure. The transformed results were used for further analysis.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that participants who viewed a meme that receiving positively valenced comments and emoticons would be more likely to endorse stereotypes associated with dark-skin Blacks than participants who viewed a meme receiving negatively valenced comments and emoticons. A two-way ANOVA did not demonstrate any significant effects. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

The measure for the spiral of silence assessed the participant’s willingness to expression their opinion on skin-tone bias. A two-way ANOVA did not demonstrate any significant effects. Further analysis of the variable was conducted considering motivation for Twitter use. A 12-item measure on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) assessed motivation for using Twitter. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) controlling for overall motivation for twitter use, was significant, F (4, 123) = 4.07, p < .01, η² = 0.12. Specifically, motivation for twitter use demonstrated a significant main effect, F (1, 123) = 12.35, p < .01, η² = 0.09. Additionally, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) controlling for Twitter use motivated by opinion expression was significant (F (4, 123), p
Specifically, motivation for Twitter use by opinion expression produced a significant main effect, $F (1, 123), p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.11$.

The last component of shared reality was measured by assessing the perception of the prevalence of colorism among Blacks. A two-way ANOVA did not demonstrate any significant effects. However, a two-way ANOVA for the item ‘Percentage of Blacks in the United States that believe dark-skinned Blacks are poorer than light-skinned Blacks’ approached significance for a main effect for source cue, $F (1, 124) = 3.53, p = .06, \eta^2 = 0.03$.

**Racial Identity and Skin-tone Identity**

The sum of responses to the MIBI measure was treated as a single unit of analysis, with reversed items recoded to the same direction of the other items. An ANCOVA controlling for racial identity ($M = 31.46, SD = 4.35$) as a covariate demonstrated that there were no other significant effects.

An ANCOVA controlling for skin-tone identity ($M = 2.73, SD = 0.83$) as a covariate demonstrated an overall significant effect, $F (4, 123) = 2.63, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.08$. Specifically, there was a significant main effect for skin tone identity when the outcome variable was stereotype endorsement, $F (1, 123) = 7.65, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.06$. When the outcome variable was humor, there was an overall significant effect, $F (4, 123) = 2.68, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.08$. Specifically, there was a significant main effect for skin tone identity, $F (1, 123) = 4.24, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.03$. Additionally, there was a significant interaction between source cue and feedback, $F (1, 123) = 3.96, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.03$. 

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As it pertains to identification with the commenter, an ANCOVA controlling for identification with the commenter as a covariate demonstrated no significant effects. Further analysis utilizing a two-way ANOVA demonstrated a significant overall effect for source cue and feedback, $F(3, 124) = 33.86, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.45$. Specifically, participants reported significantly greater identification with the commenter when the feedback was negative ($M = 24.05, \text{SD} = 8.25$), than when the feedback was positive ($M = 10.41, \text{SD} = 7.02$), $F(1, 124) = 99.30, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.44$. 

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Chapter 5: Discussion

This research set out to understand the role of feedback (i.e., positive versus negative) within an online setting on attitude, behavioral intention and perception of social reality. Specifically, this research focused on positively and negatively valenced feedback provided on *memes* negatively portraying dark-skinned Blacks as poor. Overall, the hypotheses presented were not supported.

It was predicted that participants who viewed a meme receiving positively valenced comments and emoticons would report a more positive attitude towards skin-tone bias (i.e., negatively stereotyping dark-skinned Blacks). The relationship between feedback and attitude was significant, however it was in the opposite direction of what was predicted. Participants exposed to positive feedback reported a more negative attitude than participants exposed to negative feedback.

The negative attitudinal reaction to the meme receiving positive feedback in an intragroup setting may have been the result moral intuition or a *black sheep effect*. The stimuli within the study provided a strong induction by negatively depicting dark-skinned Blacks (e.g., homeless and asking for money) as poor. According to moral judgment theory, people evaluate a situation as good or bad through *reasoning* or *intuition* (Haidt, 2001). Moral intuition, specifically, occurs quickly or automatic, without much effort. Furthermore, this intuition is context dependent (Haidt, 2001). Within a context where
intragroup interaction was salient, exposure to negative portrayals of Blacks positively reinforced by other Blacks may have enacted an intuitive response to condemn the behavior.

Furthermore, this intuitive response may have stemmed from a need to protect the intragroup identity. According to the black sheep hypothesis, evaluations of ingroup members are may be extremely positive or extremely negative (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). This relationship is attenuated when the social identity of the subject of evaluation is salient and it is reliant on identification with one’s ingroup. When an ingroup member is perceived as likeable, they receive a more positively valenced evaluation. However, when the ingroup member is perceived as unlikeable, their evaluation is extremely negative. An ingroup member may be seen as unlikeable when the engage in behavior that is counter to the social norms of the group (Marques et al., 1988). Within the study, participants where in a setting that made the social identity of the subject for evaluation (i.e., the fictional Twitter commenters), as well as their personal social identity salient. When the subject provided positive feedback to the meme negatively portraying dark-skinned Blacks, the behavior may have been deemed as contradictory to the norm of the group. Consequently, the attitude resulting from the encounter (e.g., attitude towards the meme and attitude towards posting the meme) would be extremely negative. The role of social identity and evaluation is further demonstrated in participants’ evaluation of identification with the fictional Twitter commenters. Participants who viewed positive feedback on the meme post reported significantly less
identification with the commenter than when the commenter provided negative feedback to the meme.

The results also demonstrated that skin-tone plays an important role in skin-tone bias. When dark-skinned Blacks positively reinforced the meme, it was reported as more humorous. This demonstrates that humor may act as a discounting cue when the target of discrimination (i.e., dark-skinned Black) endorses the behavior.

Not only was skin-tone important as it relates to the source of the feedback, but skin-tone identity served as a significant covariate. Specifically, skin tone identity was a significant covariate when the outcome variable was stereotype endorsement and humor. This demonstrates that when viewing acts of colorism, African Americans view this occurrence through the lens of their skin tone.

**Implications**

Although the results were not consistent with the hypotheses, they provide a glimpse into colorism within the African American community. Specifically, African Americans have an overall negative opinion towards discriminating against dark-skinned Blacks. This is demonstrated by the negative evaluation of the meme when it received positive endorsements from the commenters.

Furthermore, this research provided an understanding of the social implications of endorsing colorism. Although the study approached the experiment from the perspective of the participant (i.e., how the participant would evaluate the meme) the results demonstrate that endorsing colorism leads to negative social consequences. The fictional Twitter commenters who endorse the meme post were rated as having a lower
identification with the participant then if they had provided negative feedback. In an intragroup setting where identification with other ingroup members is integral to successful interactions, this behavior may prove detrimental. According to the SCT, African Americans may be motivated to refrain from engaging in the endorsing or sharing of information portraying colorism in order to avoid ostracism from their ingroup.

Most importantly, this study provides a glimpse into the state of colorism within the African American community. The negatively valenced attitudes of the meme post and the negative evaluations of the commenter demonstrate that skin-tone biases actions are counter to the social norms of the group as a whole. This norm is especially attenuated within a intragroup setting.
Chapter 6: Limitations and Future Research

Although the study provided insight into colorism within social media, it yielded limitations in interpreting the role of positive feedback on attitude, behavioral intention and shared reality. The stimuli shown to participants negatively depicted a dark-skinned African American as poor. Participants reported negative opinions of the meme, causing the data to be positively skewed. This limited interpretation of social influence as a result of a meme that could be generalized to social media use. For instance, the data demonstrated a difference in behavioral intention and meme dissemination between participants who viewed positive versus negative feedback, however this difference was not significant.

Future research will be conducted with a similar theoretical framework to understand the role of feedback on social influence within social media. The research will study social influence through memes, but will concentrate on a concept or idea that will not enact polarized opinions. Furthermore, this research will examine the role of humor as a possible discounting cue as it pertains to attitudes.

Additionally, future research will exam the role of knowledge of meme culture as it pertains to social influence. As discussed previously, memes serve the purpose of evolving culture through the spread of ideas, concepts, slogans, etc. Internet memes allow for the spread of the cultural ideas and aid in continuing the popular discourse of society.
Essentially, memes are capable of enacting satire in order to create social change. Understanding of the purpose of memes may cause participants to view the memes from a satirical perspective or from the perspective of wanting to participate in the spread of the cultural idea through the meme. Post hoc analysis through an independent sample t-test demonstrated a significant difference in attitude towards sharing the meme by age group. Participants of the median age and below (i.e., 29) reported a more positive attitude towards the dissemination of the meme than participants above the median age, \( t(145) = 2.62, p < .05 \). Consequently, knowledge of this culture may play a role in evaluation of the concept or idea presented in the meme. Participants in the lower age group may have had more familiarity with meme culture than older participants.
References


Appendix A: Recruitment Form

Welcome to the Internet Memes and People Perception Study! This study is being conducted by the School of Communication at The Ohio State University.

If you agree to participate in this research study, you will be asked to read a twitter message and fill out an online questionnaire. If you avoid distractions, this study should take no more than 20 minutes.

As a member of the panel run by Qualtrics Inc., you may be eligible for the incentives (e.g., reward points) offered by Qualtrics and their panel partners for your participation. Please note that the actual amount of incentive, which ranges from $1 to $2, will vary depending on (1) your panel account set-up (your preferred reward type) and (2) the time you spend on participating in this research study, which will be prorated.

You must be 18 years or older to participate in this study. Your decision to participate in this research is voluntary. Refusal to take part in or withdrawal from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would otherwise receive. If you have questions about the study, please contact Dr. J. Roselyn Lee at lee-won.1@osu.edu.

We greatly appreciate your consideration in participating in this study.
Appendix B: Informed Consent

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Internet Memes and People Perception Study

Principal Investigator: Roselyn Lee-Won

Sponsor: School of Communication, The Ohio State University

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary. Please consider the information carefully. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to click the “I agree” button below

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand how people process social media posts on twitter.

Procedures/Tasks:
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to evaluate a meme post on twitter. You will be asked questions related to how you feel about the content of the meme and questions related to your future behavior in relation to the meme. You will take the study and complete the questionnaire alone.

Duration:
This study should take no longer than 20 minutes if you participate without distractions. Your responses will remain confidential, and you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Furthermore, you have the right to skip individual questions if you do not wish to answer them. If you decide to skip a question, you will not be prevented from moving from page to page within Qualtrics for not answering any question. And your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.
Risks and Benefits:

1) Risks: There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. As noted below, your responses will be confidential. While we strive to use industry-standard security technology to help protect your personal or demographic information, because this study uses an online questionnaire, we are unable to guarantee complete Internet security as transmissions can be intercepted and IP addresses can be identified. However, we will make every effort to protect confidentiality of your information and the collected data will be password-protected.

2) Benefits: There are no direct and immediate benefits that will be offered to participants. However, findings of this research study could advance social scientific understanding of influence within social media.

Confidentiality:

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:

As a member of the panel run by Qualtrics Inc., you may be eligible for the incentives (e.g., reward points) offered by Qualtrics and their panel partners for your participation. Please note that the actual amount of incentive, which ranges from $1 to $2, will vary depending on (1) your panel account set-up (your preferred reward type) and (2) the time you spend on participating in this research study, which will be prorated. This compensation is NOT CONTINGENT on your completion of the study, and you may leave the study at any time, and still be able to claim the reward worth your participation. You may also request withdrawal. Please be reminded that the actual amount to be compensated to you will entirely depend on Qualtrics Panels and their panel partners’ decision, and the OSU investigators will NOT have any involvement in the incentivizing process. Have you any questions or concerns about the incentive, please direct them to the panel company.

Participant Rights:
You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, you may contact Dr. Roselyn Lee-Won at lee-won.1@osu.edu or (614) 247-1691.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Please indicate your agreement to the following statement to continue:

“I have read this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.”

- [ ] I agree
- [ ] I do not agree
Appendix C: Stimuli

Stimuli for Dark-Skin Source Cue and Negative Feedback Condition
Stimuli for Light-Skin Source Cue and Negative Feedback Condition
Stimuli for Dark-Skin Source Cue and Positive Feedback Condition
Stimuli for Light-Skin Source Cue and Positive Feedback Condition
Appendix D: Measures

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity

1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.
2. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.
3. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.
4. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of personal I am.
5. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.
6. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.
7. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.
8. Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships.

Skin Tone Identity

In terms of skin color, are you:

1. Very Light Skinned
2. Light Brown
3. Medium Brown
4. Dark Skinned
5. Very Dark Skinned

Motivation for Twitter Use

We are interested in your motivations of Twitter use. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

“I use Twitter…”:
1. To learn about current affairs
2. To see various viewpoints on social issues
3. To obtain information and knowledge
4. To express my political and/or social views
5. To share my opinion about political and/or social issues with others
6. To express my opinion about political and/or social issues
7. To meet new people
8. To stay connected with people I know
9. To get connected with people I cannot meet elsewhere
10. To find entertaining content
11. To pass time
12. To relieve boredom

**Evaluation of the Meme**

How do you find the meme shown in Taylor Brown’s tweet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funny</th>
<th>Rude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>Depressing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amusing</td>
<td>Offensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilarious</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witty</td>
<td>Hurtful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Identifacation with the Source**

1. I feel a bond with these people
2. I see myself belonging to these people
3. I find myself similar to these people
4. I feel closely connected to these people
5. I identify myself with these people

**Affect**

Please rate how much you are feeling the following emotions right now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cheerful</th>
<th>Sad</th>
<th>Angry at self</th>
<th>Embarrassed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disgusted</td>
<td>Afraid</td>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>Distressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>Amused</td>
<td>Entertained</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>Upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frightened</td>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>Irritable</td>
<td>Humiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delighted</td>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>Ashamed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scared</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Concerned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgusted with self</td>
<td>Dissatisfied with self</td>
<td>Hopeless</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilty</td>
<td>Remorse</td>
<td>Regretful</td>
<td>Stressful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pervasive**

1. Percentage of Blacks in the United States that believe dark-skinned Blacks are
lazier than light skinned Blacks.
2. Percentage of Blacks in the United States that believe dark-skinned Blacks are
less attractive than light skinned Blacks.
3. Percentage of Blacks in the United States that believe dark-skinned Blacks
commit more crimes than light skinned Blacks.
4. Percentage of Blacks in the United States that believe dark-skinned Blacks are
less intelligent than light skinned Blacks.
5. Percentage of Blacks in the United States that believe dark-skinned Blacks are less motivated than light skinned Blacks.
6. Percentage of Blacks in the United States that believe dark-skinned Blacks are poorer than light skinned Blacks.
7. Percentage of Blacks in the United States that believe dark-skinned Blacks are more aggressive than light skinned Blacks.
8. Percentage of Blacks in the United States that believe dark-skinned Blacks are less educated than light skinned Blacks.

**Stereotype Endorsement**

1. Dark-skinned Blacks tend to be lazier than light-skinned Blacks.
2. Dark-skinned Blacks tend to be less attractive than light-skinned Blacks.
3. Dark-skinned Blacks tend to commit more crimes than light-skinned Blacks.
4. Dark-skinned Blacks tend to be less intelligent than light-skinned Blacks.
5. Dark-skinned Blacks tend to be less motivated than light-skinned Blacks.
6. Dark-skinned Blacks tend to be poorer than light-skinned Blacks.
7. Dark-skinned Blacks tend to be more aggressive than light-skinned Blacks.
8. Dark-skinned Blacks tend to be less educated than light-skinned Blacks.

**Spiral of Silence**

How willing would you be to express your opinion about negative stereotyping of dark-skinned Blacks in the following situations?

1. In a television interview
2. In a conversation with your friends
3. In a conversation with your work colleagues
4. Through a private message (i.e., direct message) through your Twitter page
5. Through a public tweet on your Twitter page

**Behavioral Intention**

Please indicate how likely you will engage in the following behavior

1. Posting a tweet that criticizes negative stereotyping of dark-skinned Blacks
2. Posting a tweet that criticizes discrimination of dark-skinned Blacks
3. Posting a tweet that criticizes trivializing of dark-skinned Blacks
4. Posting a tweet that endorses negative stereotyping of dark-skinned Blacks
5. Posting a tweet that endorses discrimination of dark-skinned Blacks
6. Posting a tweet that endorses trivializing of dark-skinned Blacks

**Attitude**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bad</th>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Foolish</td>
<td>Wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Harmful</td>
<td>Harmless</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
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