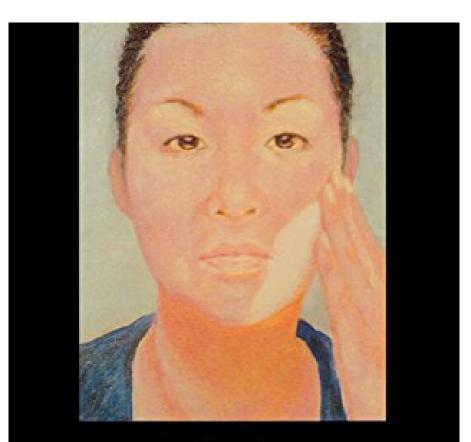


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Review

This eye-opener exposes a prevalent but concealed issue of colorism among Asian Americans. . . . Considering that the scholarly literature on colorism among Asian Americans is very limited in contrast with the rich literature on other racial groups, Rondilla and Spickard's book is a pioneering work that raises numerous questions inviting further research. Highly recommended. (CHOICE)

Rondilla and Spickard deftly expose the unacknowledged but pervasive phenomenon of colorism in Asian American communities. Their brilliant and complex analysis goes beyond the Black/White racial paradigm and covers a broad range of topics including family pressures to be light, class status, the use of skin lighteners, and cosmetic surgery. The analysis is daring and pathbreaking. This is, unequivocally, the most comprehensive and sophisticated book on this issue to date. (Margaret Hunter, Loyola Marymount University)

Is Lighter Better? breaks new ground to explore the many ways that colorism profoundly influences Asian Americans, especially women. Relying upon in-depth interviews and survey data with individuals from many Asian communities, the authors skillfully link the desire for lighter skin and 'sharp' [European-like] facial features to systems of racial domination and status inequalities that equate dark complexion with a peasant past. Complicit in fostering colorism is the beauty industry, which promises that skin lighteners and cosmetic surgery to alter Asian features—to look more White—solve all problems. Replete with rich examples and keen insights, this book is essential reading for anyone interested in the complexities of color hierarchies. (Verna M. Keith, Arizona State University)

This is a riveting book, which reveals the complex issue of colorism in the Asian Pacific Islander American community. People are caught between assumed hegemonic Whiteness and challenges to authenticity because they may not be 'Asian looking enough.' Colorism strikes at the very core of what it means to be Asian American today. Is it just 'self hate' that motivates some to whiten their skin, straighten their hair, or have eyelid surgery? Is Lighter Better? exposes the unspoken assumptions of colorism in some Asian Pacific Islander communities and brings to light complex bodily negotiations and hierarchies of acceptance based on

race, class, and gender appearances. The answers may not always be as they appear. (Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain, author of Pure Beauty: Judging Race in Japanese American Beauty Pageants)

About the Author

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Colorism is defined as "discriminatory treatment of individuals falling within the same 'racial' group on the basis of skin color." In other words, some people, particularly women, are treated better or worse on account of the color of their skin relative to other people who share their same racial category. Colorism affects Asian Americans from many different backgrounds and who live in different parts of the United States. Is Lighter Better? discusses this often-overlooked topic. Joanne L. Rondilla and Paul Spickard ask important questions such as: What are the colorism issues that operate in Asian American communities? Are they the same issues for all Asian Americans—for women and for men, for immigrants and the American born, for Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Vietnamese, and other Asian Americans? Do they reflect a desire to look like White people, or is some other motive at work? Including numerous stories about and by people who have faced discrimination in their own lives, this book is an invaluable resource for people interested in colorism among Asian Americans.

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