

Shades of Identity: Exploring the Impact of Skin Tone, Gender, and Racial Identity on Self-Esteem in African American Emerging Adults

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Background:

- Within the population of African American emerging adults, there are several underlying issues that contribute to self esteem.
- Research has found that lighter skin colored African Americans tend to exhibit stronger racial identity, and that darker skin individuals that are more satisfied with their skin color actually tend to have lower self-esteem (Coard et al, 2006).
- Ecological momentary assessment (EMA) has not been used to examine how these factors impact self esteem in the daily lives of African American emerging adults.

Hypothesis: We hypothesized that light skinned individuals (in comparison to darker skin tones), males (in comparison to females), and individuals with high momentary racial identity will have higher momentary self esteem.

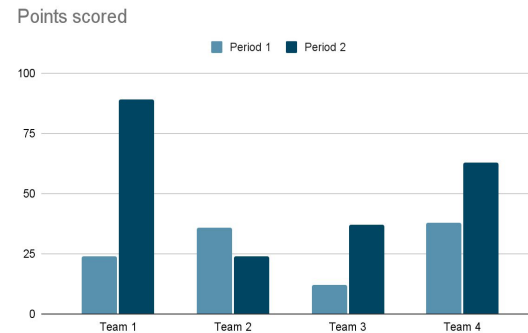
Methods

- **Participants:** 53 healthy African American emerging adults
- **Procedure:** 2 comprehensive office visits and 4 days of ambulatory monitoring
- **Measure:** Ecological Momentary Assessment, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity

Results

Multiple linear regression analysis found that:

- The male gender was significantly associated with higher momentary self-esteem, $b = 0.21, p = .042$.
- Lighter self-reported skin tone was significantly associated with higher momentary self-esteem, $b = 0.23, p < .0001$.
- Higher momentary racial identity, was significantly associated with higher momentary self-esteem, $b = 0.33, p < .0001$.



Discussion

- These findings suggest that black identity and skin tone must be considered within theories of self esteem and that individual-level self-esteem should be addressed in holistic, multidimensional, multi-level movements to reduce negative skin-tone related stereotypes and beliefs within the African American community.
- To ultimately improve self esteem amongst various skin tone colors in African American youth both self work and collective work is necessary (the black is beautiful movement only looked at collective discourse but there are individual threats and insecurities that are barriers to making progress).
- If future research can find ways to improve the attitudes, discourse, and language used in households and communities, this would heavily impact the collective (macro level), as individuals who feel more comfortable and as if their self esteem is not being threatened may be more open to having discourse.

References:

- Coard, S., Breland A., & Raskin, P. (2006). Perceptions of and Preferences for Skin Color, Black Racial Identity, and Self-Esteem Among African Americans. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, (31)11, 2256-2274.
- Sellers, R., Rowley, S., Chavous, T., Shelton, J., & Smith, M. Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity: A Preliminary Investigation of Reliability and Construct Validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, (73)4, 805-815.