

The Role of Skin Complexion on African American Emerging Adults

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It is important to explore the role of skin complexion to diminish the social equity gap between various skin complexions discussed in the literature by Keith & Herring (1991), Edwards (1972), and Hunter (2007) & Hunter (2013) to foster a better understanding of psychological well-being for individuals in the African-American community. This qualitative study expands on the skin complexion literature using a Critical Race lens to explore colorism throughout the lifespan of African-American emerging adults. A brief survey was also used to gather information about the participants' current well-being, self-perception of skin complexion, and satisfaction level with skin complexion. In addition, focus groups were conducted with 14 African-American emerging adult college students aged of 18 to 26 to gather information regarding how skin complexion has played a role throughout their lifespan until emerging adulthood. After examining participants' responses, five themes were found within the data: 1) gender matters, 2) mate selection bias, 3) family dynamics, 4) media, and 5) resilience. These themes are used to discuss implications for intervention. We suggest that future researchers explore these themes with participants who have a broader range of skin complexion identifications.