

Racial Discrimination and Skin Tone Self-Concept on the Skin Tone Satisfaction of Latinx Youth

Kayla M. Osman¹, Katharine H. Zeiders¹, Antoinette M. Landor², Ada M. Wilkinson-Lee¹, Lindsay T. Hoyt³, Stefanie Martinez-Fuentes¹, & Victoria Rueda¹

¹The University of Arizona, ²The University of Missouri Columbia, ³Fordham University

BACKGROUND

Racism occurs alongside **colorism** (a system of social stratification that privileges lighter skin over darker skin; Landor & McNeil Smith, 2019). Colorism holds historical and contemporary significance to Latinx populations (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014), and Latinx youth develop their sense of self and make meaning of their appearances in the context of these systems.

- **Skin Tone Satisfaction (STS):** how satisfied one is with the color of their skin.
- **Skin Tone Self-Concept (SSC):** how much an individual incorporates their skin tone with their self-concept.

Past work suggests that aspects of identity develop within contextual experiences of discrimination, and these experiences may negatively impact one's sense of identity (Yip, 2018). Having a positive self-concept may protect against discrimination (e.g., self-esteem, ethnic-racial identity; Tynes et al., 2012). However, little is known about how experiences of racial discrimination may impact other aspects of self-perceptions, such as STS among Latinx youth or how one's SSC may inform this relationship, particularly across multiple days.

Current Study

The current study examined how racial discrimination impacts STS, and how SSC may protect against this effect, among Latinx youth across a 4-day period.

METHODS

Procedure and Sample

Data
Four daily diary surveys in English with 60 Southwestern Latinx youth.

| Age | Nativity and US Arrival | Ethnicity |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| ○ 14.3 years (<i>SD</i> = 1.4) | ○ US-born (94.5%) | ○ Mexican American (61.8%) |
| | ○ Non-US-born were born in Mexico and arrived in the US at age 7 (<i>SD</i> = 1.0) | ○ Mexican (9.1%) |
| Gender | | ○ Hispanic (9.1%) |
| ○ Boys (47.3%) | | ○ Latino/Latinx (7.3%) |
| ○ Girls (43.6%) | | ○ Chicano (3.6%) |
| ○ Gender Diverse (7.2%) | | |

Daily Measures

| Construct | Example Item | Items and Scoring |
|---|---|---|
| Racial Discrimination (Harrell, 1997) | Being accused of something or treated suspiciously [today, because of your race/ethnicity]. | 18 items; 0 = No 1 = Yes |
| Skin Tone Self-Concept (ICS; Harvey et al., 2017) | Today, my skin tone was an important component of who I am. | 4 items; 1 = Strongly disagree → 5 = Strongly agree |
| Skin Tone Satisfaction (Landor et al., 2013) | Today, I liked my skin color. | 1 item; 1 = Strongly disagree → 5 = Strongly agree |

Analyses

Multilevel models were conducted in SAS across four days. Discrimination and skin tone self-concept were time-varying predictors that were within-person centered as well as between-person centered. A within-person interaction term between discrimination and skin tone self-concept was included in the models.

RESULTS

Table 1. Effects of Discrimination and SSC on Skin Tone Satisfaction (STS) among Latinx Youth

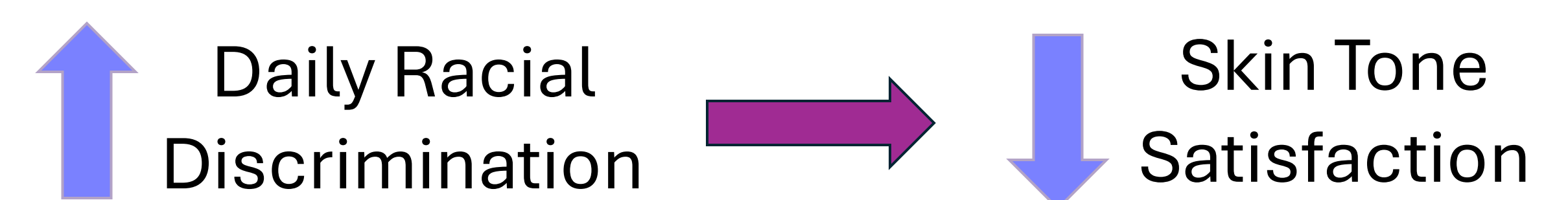
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | <i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>) | <i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>) | <i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>) |
| Intercept | 4.70 (.09)*** | 4.48 (.89)*** | 4.61 (.98)*** |
| Gender | .30 (.20) | .47 (.18)* | .43 (.20)* |
| Age | -.03 (.07) | -.02 (.06) | -.03 (.07) |
| Time | -.06 (.03)* | -.06 (.03)* | -.06 (.03)* |
| WP Discrimination (Disc) | -.04 (.02)* | | -.03 (.02) |
| BP Discrimination (Disc) | -.07 (.04)* | | |
| WP Skin Tone Self-Concept (SSC) | | .07 (.08) | .09 (.08) |
| BP Skin Tone Self-Concept (SSC) | | .37 (.10)*** | |
| WP Disc X WP SSC | | | .09 (.04)* |

Note. Gender was coded 1 = boy, 0 = all other genders. Time is included in the model to control for changes in the DV across the four days. WP = Within-Person effect; BP = Between-Person effect. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001

RESULTS (CONT.)

At low levels of SSC:

- On days when youth experienced more racial discrimination, they reported lower levels of skin tone satisfaction (*b* = -.07, *SE* = .02, *p* = .003).



At high levels of SSC:

- Daily experiences of racial discrimination did not significantly predict daily levels of skin tone satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

Contributions

Our study advances our understanding of the ways in which racism and colorism inform how Latinx youth in the US feel about their skin tone and come to terms with their sense of self, on a daily basis.

Key Findings

On days that youth experienced *greater* experiences of racial discrimination, they reported *lower* levels of skin tone satisfaction.

- Negative racialized experiences may cause youth to view aspects of their identity (Seaton et al., 2009) and self-esteem (Szalacha et al., 2003) more negatively, and similar processes may occur with their physical appearance and skin tone.

On average, youth who reported *higher* skin-tone self-concept reported *higher* levels of skin tone satisfaction.

Skin-tone self concept buffered the relationship between daily experiences of discrimination and daily skin tone satisfaction.

- At low levels of SSC, greater daily experiences of discrimination predicted lower daily levels of satisfaction.
- At high levels of SSC, daily experiences of discrimination did not significantly predict daily levels of satisfaction.

Implications

The study highlights the importance of exploring both racism and colorism among US Latinx youth.

- These findings imply that discrimination experiences influence the way youth of color perceive their skin tone.
- The way youth integrate their skin tone with their self concept may offer protection against negative racialized experiences.
- Findings suggest the importance of promoting positive feelings about one's skin tone in combination with one's sense of self.

Limitations and Future Directions

The small sample size limited our ability to test for more complex interactions and data is limited to assessments across four days.

- Future research should explore additional moderators (i.e., gender, skin tone), to understand heterogeneity among youth
- Future research should examine these relationships over longer periods of time.

