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Effie Mathew

Thomas Jefferson University, effie.mathew@jefferson.edu

Krys Foster, MD

Thomas Jefferson University, krys.foster@jefferson.edu

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Identifying Protective Factors in Response to Discriminatory Experiences among Pregnant African American Woman

*Effie Mathew, Dr. Krys Foster**

Abstract

Adverse maternal-fetal health outcomes, such as low birth weight and preterm delivery, are disproportionately more likely among African-Americans than Non-Hispanic Whites. Experiences of discrimination have been hypothesized as a contributing factor to the large discrepancies in maternal-fetal health outcomes. It is well understood that with increased levels of self-reported discrimination, there are lower ratings of physical and mental health, and higher reporting rates of depressive symptoms; this relationship is stronger in women. In addition to this, skin tone has long been a marker for social class and opportunity, but research on skin tone as a risk factor for African Americans has been less extensive. How skin tone modulates the experience of discrimination for African American women and subsequent maternal-fetal health outcomes still remains a topic of interest. Variations in skin complexion have been implicated in affecting protective factors such as self-esteem and mastery. We aim to identify themes in an interview survey that explores the relationship between self-perceived complexion and the aforementioned protective factors that African American women possess in response to discriminatory experiences. In this project, we propose to complete an exploratory interview among pregnant African American women concerning protective factors in response to discriminatory experiences. Factors to be addressed include reflections on previously encountered discriminatory experiences, self-perceived complexion, mastery, and self-esteem.