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# The Liberation of Afro-Latinx College Women from Traditional Beauty Standards

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## Background

- Unhealthy beauty standards can have negative effects on self-perceptions and mental health and lead to several problems, including eating disorders, body dysmorphia, and, in some cases death (Kholmogorova et al., 2018) Most of this work has been conducted with white women samples (Adames et al., 2021); however, there has been increasing attention on the impact of Eurocentric beauty standards on women of color (Kholmogorova et al., 2018).
  - Literature now focusing on women of color such as Xicana women, African American women, and Asian American women. However, there is a gap in the literature that lacks the understanding of the Afro-Latinx experience
  - This study introduces a liberation lens that touches on how Afro-Latinx women have independently challenged these norms yet are still facing mental health strains.
  - The world of psychological research is in dire need of this lens in order to escape the white dominant narrative that continues to perpetuate mental illness in a large population of Black women by not being able to properly inform praxis.

## Aims

The aim of this study is to explore how Afro-Latinx women describe their experiences with challenging anti-Black narratives within their cultures through a review of literature and podcasting. The research specifically aims to answer the following question:

**How do Afro-Latinx college women liberate themselves from Eurocentric beauty standards?**



(Figure 1- Logo of the researcher's podcast "La Pollera y El Congo" where data analysis was reviewed)

## Methods

This qualitative study sought out participants who identified as Afro-Latinx women with college experience. Participants were recruited via social media (Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat) through snowball sampling.

- Out of 14 participants recruited, 8 completed the interview process.
- Ages averaged of 23 years old
- Most women attended college in the Northeastern region of the U.S. The interviews averaged to 60 minutes Interviews were then transcribed through Panopto and coded using thematic analyses.
- The results and discussion were reported via **podcasting (figure 1 shows the logo of the series)** and disseminated through streaming channels (Spotify, Apple Podcasts, etc.) along with a literature review. The researcher chose a podcast as the dissemination tool to explore a new approach in making academic research more accessible for non-academic populations who can benefit from the implications of the study.

## Results

### Themes

Intergenerational Progression of Awareness	Self-Defining Afro-Latinidad	Seeking Black Liberation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservative standards of Grandparents and parents who are first generation</li> <li>• Vs. liberating views of second and third generation parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neglecting the "and/or"</li> <li>• Evaluating one's proximity to whiteness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detachment from significance of hair</li> <li>• Challenging Fetishization</li> </ul>

## Results cont'd

### Intergenerational Progression of Awareness

"...my Dominican grandma is a big fan of like whitening the race. She was very happy that my mom married a white man.... she doesn't understand systematic racism because it wasn't talked about when she was growing up..." - *Patricia*, 19

"She's [her mom] been here since she was young, so she's not, like stuck in the original Haitian mindset that some people may say...we all are kind of modern enough to understand ... that there are different beauty standards. That's not just the European look. " - *Laura*, 22

### Self-Defining Afro-Latinidad

"the Latinos for Black Lives signs that kind of went around during the Black Lives Matter movement... when you say Latinos for Black Lives, it kind of excludes the fact that there are black lives within the Latino community." - *Monica*, 20

"after discovering the term Afro-Latino or Latina, it kind of gave me a sense of being like I finally fit in somewhere and I knew... where I belong to and a specific term to describe myself, when it came to just my identity" - *Daria*, 20

## Discussion

Afro Latinx women receive consistent pressure through their communities to subscribe to restricting identities. The participants in this study were able to identify how rhetoric such as "whitening the race" and "Latinos for Black lives" insinuates erasure of Black Latinos and advocates for a specific standard of "Latinx". Furthermore, this creates an environment that neglects their liberation and in turn causes low perceptions of self-value and low self-esteem. These young college women however have been able to counter the takeover of white supremacy by neglecting this narrative and uplifting their Blackness.

## References