Measuring Hair Bias in Generation-Z

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The impact of hair bias on black women's professional opportunities and self-esteem is a significant and understudied issue, especially in younger generations. Previous research has examined hair bias and its effects, but there is a lack of focus on the perspectives and experiences of Generation Z. This study aims to address this gap by surveying Generation Z to understand their views on black women's hair and the impact of hair bias on their professional opportunities and self-esteem.

Introduction

Hair bias refers to discrimination and prejudice based on the texture, style, and appearance of a person's hair. Black women, in particular, face widespread hair bias in society and the workplace. Many black women are pressured to straighten their hair or to wear certain styles in order to conform to white beauty standards and to be seen as professional and competent. As a child, my Ghanaian mother would relax my hair in the bathroom of our own home. For years, she continued to straighten my hair at home, driven by a combination of societal beauty standards, personal experiences, and a desire to provide increased opportunities to me growing up American. However, as I grew older, I began to resent the pressure to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards and decided to stop relaxing my hair. This experience illustrates the societal pressure that many Black women face to conform to harmful beauty standards, which can have a negative impact on their self-esteem and mental health. As a first-hand witness to the detrimental effects of hair bias in the black community, studying the prevalence of hair bias and its impact on black women would allow me to understand these issues more deeply and potentially help to combat this form of discrimination.

In the 1960s the natural hair movement arose as a response to colorism and texturism in black communities, and the pressure to conform to white beauty standards. Originally named the

"Black Is Beautiful" movement, black men and women were encouraged to flaunt their natural hair despite disapproval from their white peers and to reject the use of chemicals and heat to straighten their hair (Griffin, 2019). Perhaps the greatest supporter of the movement was activist Marcus Garvey, who preached: "Don't remove the kinks from your hair! Remove them from your brain!" in response to the idea that black women's beauty would be more meaningful the more Eurocentric they were perceived to be. During the 1980s and 1990s, support for black hair rose, but rather than natural hair being embraced, celebrities popularized the alteration of black hair with styles such as braids and cornrows (Griffin, 2019). Prominent examples include Janet Jackson's box braids in the 1993 film *Poetic Justice* and Brandy's short braids in her hit single *I Wanna Be Down* as seen in figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: *Poetic Justice* film poster

Figure 2: Screen capture from *I Wanna Be Down* by Brandy

The acceptance of these styles has not necessarily led to a greater understanding and acceptance of natural hair in its many forms, and black women who choose to wear their hair naturally are still often met with bias and prejudice in society. As a result, the discrimination against black hair now encompasses not only natural hair textures but also hairstyles that have been traditionally associated with black culture and identity. While the natural hair movement has been successful in raising awareness and promoting a positive self-image among black women, there is still a lack of understanding and acceptance of natural hair in society and the workplace for older women.

This study aims to analyze the current state of hair bias among Generation Z and its impact on younger black women. By surveying Generation Z, I am to gather insights into their views on black women's hair and the impact of hair bias on their professional opportunities and self-esteem. The study will also examine the effectiveness of the natural hair movement in combating hair bias and promoting a positive self-image among black women.

The findings of this study have the potential to inform policies and practices that support black women and combat hair bias. By raising awareness and understanding of hair bias, I believe my readers can create a more inclusive and equitable society. The study also has the potential to promote a stronger sense of unity and confidence among black women and to support the natural hair movement in its efforts to challenge and change societal attitudes and stereotypes about black women and their hair.

Literature Review

With their report *The 'Good Hair' Study*, The Perception Institute established the primary conceptual foundation for this subject and the literature involved in it. In their research, the writers examine hair bias from the perspective of black and white women under 30 and explore the potential of both explicit and implicit biases by analyzing feedback and observed

implications (Mcgill Johnson et al., 2017). Using critical discourse and statistical analyses, The Perception Institute provides a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of hair bias and its impact on black women. They highlight a large theme surrounding the role of media and cultural representations in perpetuating hair bias. The study argues that media and cultural representations of black women and their hair often reinforce negative stereotypes and biases, contributing to the marginalization and discrimination of black women, and is reinforced in many works. Backed up by evidence studied in researcher Kristy La Mar's (2018) dissertation, *The Impact of Media Influence About Hair Texture on Internalized Racial Oppression, Ethnic Identity, and Self-Efficacy*. In her work, La Mar shows that media images of black women often depict them with straight, long, or relaxed hair and that these images are associated with positive traits such as attractiveness, success, and conformity. In contrast, media images of black women with natural, curly, or kinky hair are often associated with negative traits such as unprofessionalism, unruliness, and rebellion. The study proves that the stereotype of black hair being not as beautiful or desirable as other types of hair is still actively present in media, and those misrepresentations have a profound impact on black women's self-perception and self-esteem, reinforcing negative stereotypes and biases, and leaving many young women disgruntled with their media presence.

When it comes to embracing their natural hair, black women often find struggles due to internalized fears and conformities. In her paper, *I Am Not My Hair: African American Women and Their Struggles with Embracing Natural Hair*!, Brenda A. Randle (2015) argues that black women often feel pressure to conform to European beauty standards, which often involve straightening or chemically altering their hair in order to make it appear more "manageable" or "desirable". She also discusses the emotional and psychological impact that this pressure can have on women, and how it can lead to feelings of self-hatred and low self-esteem. As expected,

women who feel positive about their hair are more likely to have higher self-esteem and are more likely to be satisfied with their overall appearance. On the other hand, women who are dissatisfied with their hair are more likely to have lower self-esteem and may be more critical of their overall appearance. For many African American women, hair is an important aspect of their identity and can play a major role in their self-perception. Because of the unique texture and structure of African American hair, it can be difficult to style and maintain, and many African American women spend a significant amount of time and money on hair care. As a result, hair can be a source of pride and self-expression for African American women, but it can also be a source of anxiety and stress. Supported by the African American Personal Presentation: *Psychology of Hair and Self-Perception*, a journal by Nina Ellis-Hervey et al. (2016), there is a noticeable slight but significant positive correlation between higher self-esteem and those who choose to wear their hair in a natural state.

Given the lasting traumas texturism places on older black women, it is crucial to understand how it is perpetuated among younger people, identify the root of this bias, and how that root contributes to the discrimination faced by older people. A 2011 study, entitled *Hair as Race: Why "Good Hair" May Be Bad for Black Female*s, provides valuable insight into how hair bias is perpetuated among younger people (Robinson, 2011). In order to investigate how messages about hair value are sent to Black women, as well as what constitutes good and bad hair, the study draws on the narratives of 38 African women between the ages of 19 and 81. By examining the sources of these messages and the motivations behind them, the study sheds light on how hair bias is learned and passed down from one generation to the next. Once inherited, this bias seeps into the minds of young, impressionable black girls, who live internalizing what they believe to be "bad hair." Health researchers published a study in 2016 titled *No Sweat: African American adolescent girls' Attitudes about hairstyle choices and physical activity*, in

which they explore the ways in which concerns about sweat affecting their hair can prevent

Black adolescent girls from engaging in physical activity (Woolford et al., 2016). Interestingly,

the study found that the girls in the focus groups avoided getting wet or sweating during exercise

because they were worried that their straightened hair would become "nappy" and difficult to

manage. The girls said that while straightened hair was more attractive, natural hairstyles were

better for exercising—illustrating how the societal preference for s straightened hair can have

negative consequences for the health and well-being of Black girls. The No Sweat study

specifically found that, when given a choice, participants almost universally selected long,

straight hairstyles as the most attractive. This research supports the notion that "good hair,"

which often refers to longer, straighter hair, is seen as the highest quality hair and thus

preferable. The study also found that participants changed from "juvenile" (natural) hairstyles to

"adult" (straightened) styles between the ages of 8 and 15 when concerns about hairstyles began.

As reflected in these two studies, young girls susceptible to outside influences and messages are

heavily influenced by negative feedback towards natural Black hairstyles which leads to negative

self-perceptions and a lack of self-love for their hair, which leaves lasting effects as they grow

older. When young Black girls are exposed to negative feedback about their natural hair, they

may internalize these messages and grow up not loving their hair, leading to negative self-

perceptions and a cycle of internalized hatred for their hair.

In recent years, a number of studies have examined the explicit and implicit preferences for smooth hair over natural hair in various populations. However, there is a gap in the research when it comes to examining explicit and implicit preferences for smooth hair in younger generations, such as Generation Z. This is an important area to explore, as the preferences and attitudes of younger people are likely to shape the future of hair bias and discrimination. By understanding the explicit and implicit preferences of Generation Z, researchers can gain insights into how these preferences are formed and how they may evolve over time, shaping and guiding the future of Black America. This is significant because school is the foundation for future success and experiences in the workplace. By exploring hair bias and professionalism in a school setting, I aim to shed light on the root of this issue and how it may impact future opportunities for students.

Methodology

I. Research Design

This approach builds upon the foundation laid by the 2017 '*Good Hair' Study* done by the Perception Institute in which they investigated implicit and explicit biases regarding black women's hair in an all-women online community of Millennials and Generation X. I utilized a similar methodology as The Perception Institute by asking participants a handful of the same questions regarding their attitudes towards hairstyles and hair anxiety. However, my research focuses on a specific demographic - Generation Z in school settings. It utilizes a mixed-method design, combining both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure that the flaws of one data type are balanced by the strengths of the other. The quantitative aspect consists of a pre-validated questionnaire conducted using Google Forms, which measures attitudes toward hairstyles and hair anxiety among participants. The qualitative aspect consists of questions that provide an in-depth understanding of the participants' feelings toward the topic. The quantitative data will

provide a general overview of the participants' attitudes and beliefs while the qualitative data will provide a more in-depth understanding of the participants' thoughts and feelings. Additionally, an online Implicit Association Test (IAT) is used to assess implicit biases which will be quantified.

My study below, discussed in more detail, contained two components: the explicit survey and the Race Implicit Association Test (IAT).

II. How will I measure hair bias in black women?

1. Measuring Explicit Hair Bias

Explicit bias describes the consciously held negative attitudes and ideas about a particular race or group of people. Participants of all races completed the explicit survey, which measured views toward black women's hair and experiences with one's hair, but the analysis will be done by separating my data into black and non-black people. By sectioning off my data set, I am able to reach a more definite conclusion about the explicit biases of each group and how they differ based on race. This pre-validated survey will include questions that assess participants' attitudes and beliefs about different types of black women's hair and their perceptions of professionalism and opportunities for black women with different hair textures. Hair with texture is commonly associated with "black hair," while hair that is smooth is often seen as a characteristic of "white hair," so the textured and smooth hairstyle categories will be representative of black and white hair. It will also include demographic questions such as age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Those will allow me to see if there are any patterns or correlations between the demographic information and the attitudes and beliefs expressed in the survey. The optional qualitative questions will be designed to assess the validity of the data collected from the questionnaire and provide a deeper understanding of the participant's thoughts and feelings about the topic. These

qualitative questions are not required, but I believe that including them will add additional value to the study by providing a more nuanced understanding of the participants' experiences.

2. Measuring Implicit Race Bias

Implicit bias describes the negative stereotypes that are inherently associated by our brains with a particular race or group of people. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is a commonly recognized tool in measuring implicit biases, and it is important to include it in my study to gain a full understanding of the attitudes and beliefs that exist unconsciously in regard to hair bias. The IAT, developed by Project Implicit at Harvard University, measures the automatic association between concepts, such as race (e.g., European Americans and African Americans) and evaluations (e.g., Good, Bad) through a series of tasks. The results of the IAT are determined by the participants' response time, with quicker response times indicating a stronger implicit bias. For example, if a participant has a preference for European Americans over African Americans, they will respond faster when "European Americans" and "Good" share a button compared to when "African Americans" and "Good" share a button (Project Implicit, 2011). This is particularly important as research has shown that implicit biases are often unconscious and persist even in those who reject explicit biases. A previous study by Rudman and Ashmore (2007), professors at Rutgers University, found that implicit biases were strong predictors of discriminatory behavior, and these biases can be present even if an individual is not aware of them, making it crucial to assess implicit biases in my study. However, it's important to note that the IAT is only available to participants over the age of 18 due to the requirements of informed consent.

3. Limitations

I recognize that the data collected through the explicit survey will be self-reported, and may be subject to social desirability bias, leading to limitations in the validity of the findings.

With that in mind, I am interested to see the bias that participants may lean towards as that serves as a measure of what the "ideal" answer may be. When self-reports show positive attitudes, but the IAT results show negative bias, or vice versa, then there may be a discrepancy or conflict between beliefs and actions. Yet, there are grounds for concern regarding the perception of black women and their hair if self-reports are negative and the IAT also demonstrates bias.

II. Procedure (and Ethical Considerations)

1. Procedure

The survey was launched in late January 2023 and responses were collected over a two-week period. To ensure the representation of different races and genders in the sample, a self-selected volunteer sampling technique was utilized. This technique was used to recruit a sample of over 70 members of generation-Z aged 15-20 years old in Northern VA high schools and nearby universities using social media, online flyers, and school announcements. The ages 15-20 were specifically sought after because they encompass an average range of Generation Z, including responses from five years over and five years under the cutoff. To ensure an oversample of black and African Americans, I also recruited participants by emailing an invitation to two black cultural clubs at my school, Black Student Union (BSU) and CCK (Curls, Coils, and Kinks). I specifically recruited members from these clubs so that I could examine whether the explicit and implicit attitudes of people engaged in black cultural clubs differed from those in the general sample.

Data Analysis

Participants and Their Hair

Altogether, 72 participants completed the explicit survey and 26% of that group completed the IAT. Of those participants, the racial breakdown is shown in Figure 3. In my data

analysis, responses were sectioned off to analyze how they differ based on race. Illustrated in

Figure 4 are the two categories.
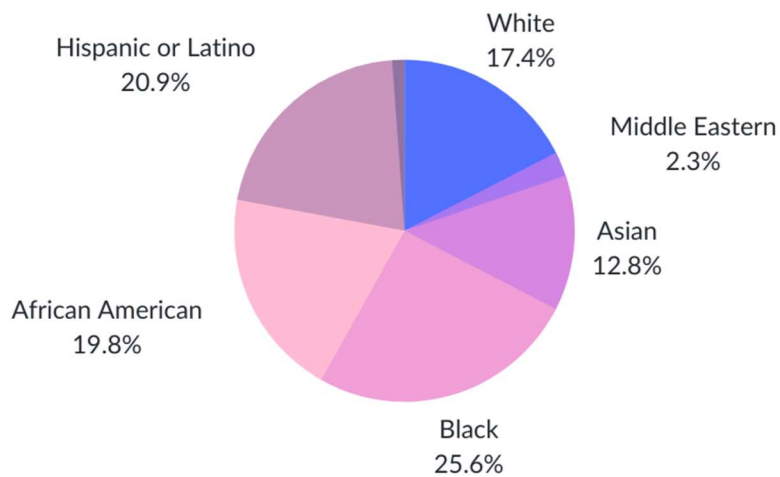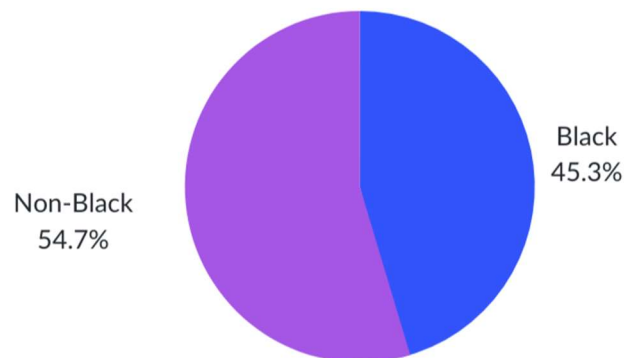
Figure 3: Full racial breakdown

Figure 4: Racial breakdown of my categories

I gathered a racially varied group of participants for this study in order to better

understand the distinct aspects of explicit and implicit attitudes in different cultural backgrounds.

It is important to note that I received one response from a self-reported "mixed" participant, but

the lack of specificity on their racial identity was not sufficient to reach any conclusions on how

their race impacts their specific experience, so I was unable to include their response in my data

analysis. In my sample of black participants, the most common hair styles were natural (59%),

braids (23%), wash-and-go (12%), and afro (6%). The most common hair styles among non-

black were natural (74%), wash-and-go (15%), smooth curls (7%), and smooth waves (4%). One

potential limitation of the study is that the sample size may not be representative of the larger

Gen Z population due to the limited population. Additionally, the study only focused on a limited

number of hair types, which may not reflect the full range of hair types present in the population.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study have important implications for addressing

hair bias in Gen Z and promoting more inclusive attitudes towards diverse hair types.

Did Participants Show Explicit Bias?

1. Quantitative Results

I used both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques to evaluate the responses

of participants to the Google Form and Implicit Association Test (IAT) surveys. The data

obtained from the Google Form survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as

frequencies, percentages, and means. The Google Form survey data was first inputted into a

spreadsheet, and responses were then tallied to determine the frequency and percentage of

responses for each question. This allowed me to identify the most common responses, trends,

and patterns among participants. Additionally, I used means and averages to summarize

participants' agreement levels with statements related to hair bias.

- ★ **On average, non-black participants exhibit explicit bias toward the textured hairstyles presented. They view it to be less beautiful, professional, and neat than the smooth hair presented.**
- ★ **Black women appear substantially more accepting of textured hair than other participants, including black men.**

★ **The devaluation of smooth hairstyles among black individuals suggests that they did not experience pressure to keep their hair straight while in school.**

Participants were shown images of one black woman with different hair styles and were asked to rate her hair in terms of how beautiful, professional, and neat they perceived it to be. Illustrated in the following pages are the average ratings towards hairstyles, by racial group. (See next page for visual).

Smooth Styles

Straight
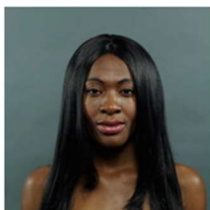
BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

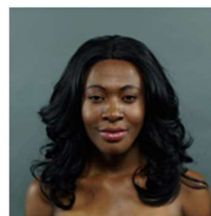| Beautiful	3.4
Professional	4
Neat	3.9

NON-BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	3.7
Professional	3.9
Neat	4.1

Black participants rate straight hair somewhat positively and non-black participants rate straight hair more positively. Among black and non-black participants, the ratings differ only slightly.

Smooth Styles

Long Curls

BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

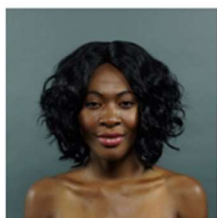| Beautiful	3.9
Professional	4.2
Neat	3.7

NON-BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	4.4
Professional	4.3
Neat	4.1

Black participants rate long curls positively and non-black participants rate long curls more positively. Among black and non-black participants, the ratings slightly differ.

Smooth Styles

Short Curls

BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

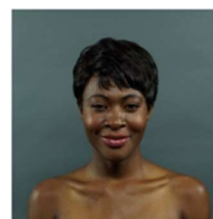| Beautiful	3.5
Professional	3.6
Neat	3.3

NON-BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	4.1
Professional	3.8
Neat	3.3

Black participants rate short curls less positively and non-black participants rate short curls slightly more positively. Among black and non-black participants, the ratings do differ.

Smooth Styles

Pixie

BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	3.3
Professional	4.2
Neat	4.2

NON-BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	4
Professional	4.4
Neat	4.5

Black participants rate the pixie cut positively, but less beautiful. Non-black participants rate the pixie cut very positively. Among black and non-black participants, the ratings do not differ largely, but there is a difference in their perceptions of beauty.

Textured Styles

Afro

BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	4.6
Professional	4.1
Neat	4.2

NON-BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

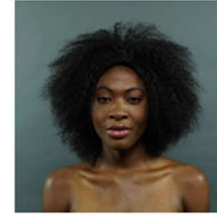| Beautiful	4.4
Professional	4
Neat	3.7

Black participants rate the afro very positively. Non-black participants rate the afro very positively. Among black and non-black participants, the ratings do differ, with an overwhelming number of positive ratings among black participants.

Textured Styles

Twist-out

BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	3.9
Professional	3.6
Neat	3.3

NON-BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	3.6
Professional	3.1
Neat	3.1

Black participants rate the twist-out mildly positively, but non-black participants rate the twist-out somewhat negatively. Among black and non-black participants, the ratings do differ.

Textured Styles

Twist

BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	4
Professional	3.5
Neat	3.6

NON-BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	3.5
Professional	3.1
Neat	2.9

Black participants rate twists mildly positively, but non-black participants rate twists somewhat negatively. Among black and non-black participants, the ratings do differ.

Textured Styles

Braids

BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	4.2
Professional	4.2
Neat	4.3

NON-BLACK PARTICIPANTS RATE THIS STYLE

Beautiful	3.8
Professional	4
Neat	4

Black participants rate braids significantly more positively. Non-black participants rate braids less positively. Among black and non-black participants, the ratings do greatly differ.

Hair Anxiety

As part of the Google Form, participants had the option to complete a series of questions regarding responded concerns, experiences, and pressures related to their hair. 24 black and 32 non-black participants completed the optional questionnaire. I examined the replies from black and non-black individuals and discovered that while almost everyone worries about their hair to some degree, black participants report higher levels of anxiety than non-black participants. Figure 5 illustrates this finding, highlighting the disparity between the experiences of black people and non-black people. This finding is significant because it highlights the prevalence of hair bias among the younger generation, which has the potential to perpetuate systemic racism and beliefs that will lead into their adult lives.

Figure 5: Worry about hair
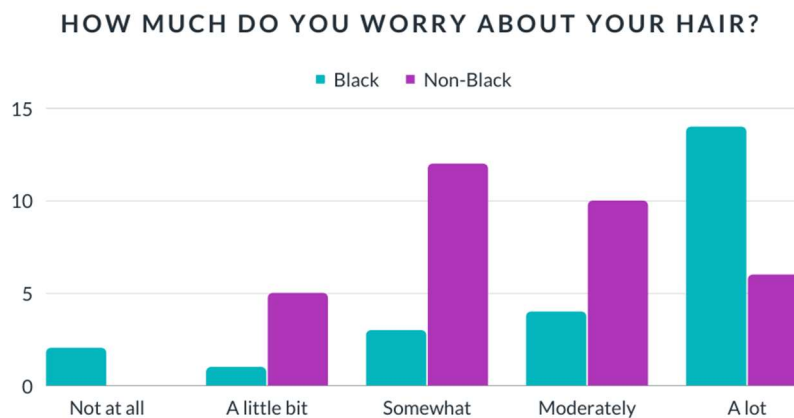
I also found that black people spend more time on average doing their hair compared to non-black people, as shown in Figure 6. This finding highlights the additional time and effort black people put into their hair to meet Western beauty standards, indicating that their hair requires more effort and attention compared to non-black individuals.

Figure 6: Time spent doing hair

IN AN AVERAGE WEEK, HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEN DOING YOUR HAIR?

■ Black ■ Non-Black
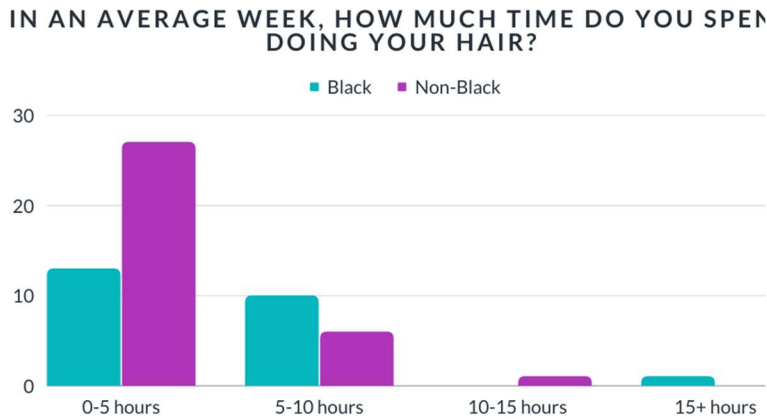
Another significant finding was that participants were uncomfortable with others touching their hair, as depicted in Figure 7. A majority of participants were uncomfortable with others touching their hair. This discomfort is a result of the objectification of black hair and the harmful stereotype that black hair is "exotic" and "different" from other hair types. Additionally, the results for participants straightening their hair varied a considerable amount toward black participants, with the majority feeling no pressure to straighten their hair and a few notable black participants feeling pressure to wear straight hair at school. On the other hand, the results for non-black participants varied less, with a large majority of them feeling no pressure to straighten their hair at school, as illustrated in figure 8.
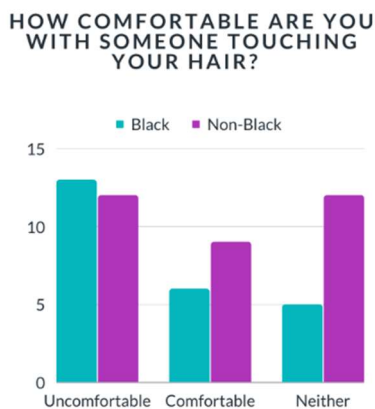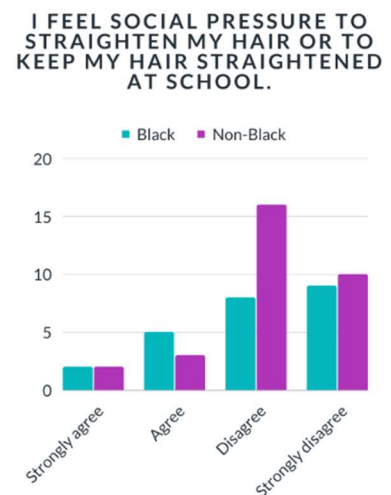
Figure 7: Touching hair   Figure 8: Straightening hair

HOW COMFORTABLE ARE YOU WITH SOMEONE TOUCHING YOUR HAIR?

■ Black ■ Non-Black

I FEEL SOCIAL PRESSURE TO STRAIGHTEN MY HAIR OR TO KEEP MY HAIR STRAIGHTENED AT SCHOOL.

■ Black ■ Non-Black

Additionally, I found that black participants were significantly more likely to experience

teasing, taunting, or bullying for their hair compared to non-black participants. A significantly

higher proportion of Black participants experienced teasing, taunting, or bullying related to their

hair compared to non-Black participants.

Figure 9: Teasing, taunting, or ridiculing
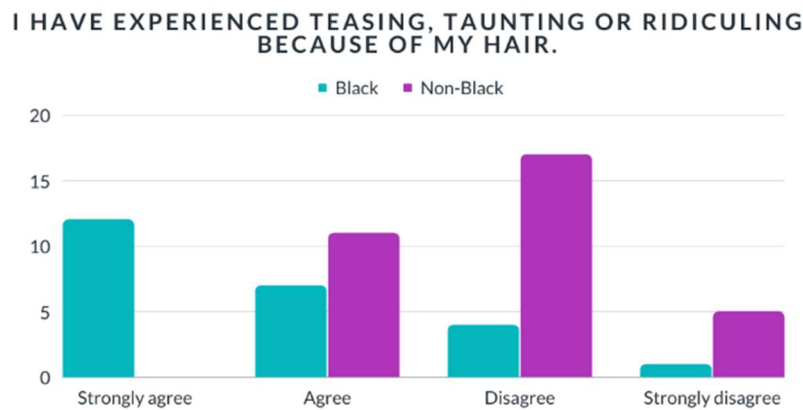
Lastly, I discovered that black participants have a greater burden associated with hair

upkeep and styling than non-black participants, which leads to greater feelings of stress and

anxiety. Compared to non-black participants, black participants reported attending more frequent

professional styling appointments. With hairstyles such as dreadlocks and box braids that need to

be redone every six to ten weeks, hair styling appointments are likely to be more frequent among

black participants. Among non-black participants whose hair ranges from straight to wavy, rather

than textured and coily, hair styling appointments are likely to be less frequent.

Figure 10: Professional styling appointments
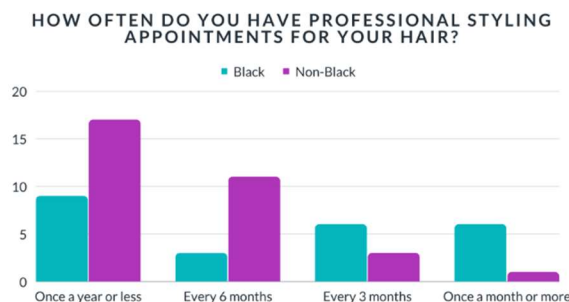
What is "Good Hair"?

As a part of the optional questionnaire on the Google Form, I asked participants to describe what "good hair" means to them. Overall, they described "good hair" as hair that makes them feel good and is healthy. They heavily emphasized the texture of the hair: they describe "good hair" as "smooth" and "silky," not "frizzy," "nappy," or "kinky." They also emphasized that this is hair someone has naturally. Here is a sample of responses:

"... someone has complimented me on my hair otherwise it doesn't feel good enough."

"Smooth and silky to touch. Not kinky or nappy"

"Luscious, smooth, complimenting."

"My 'good hair' is something I can manage and is relatively healthy."

"Nice and silky."

"To me good hair means having your hair at least moderately presentable."

"Hair that makes me feel good and is healthy. I do not want people to think it smells or looks weird."

"Not frizzy or dry and it looks and feels healthy."

"Hair style is an extension of someone's personality. It is a visual of who someone is on the inside (outside and on their head)."

"Silky and ones that match one's face and extend their facial beauty."

"Naturally beautiful and healthy hair."

"Hair that is neat and you are comfortable with and like."

"It means that you take care of your hair and put some effort into it."

"Good hair is hair that makes you feel nice and can be presented nicely."

"There are a variety of 'good hair' styles and good hair balances the amount of time spent with how symmetrical and long it is."

"Healthy, natural hair."

Did Participants Show Implicit Bias?

To assess implicit attitudes towards race, I utilized Project Implicit's Race IAT. 19 participants completed the IAT, in which they were asked to associate images of African Americans (AA) and Europeans with pleasant and unpleasant words. A faster association between Europeans and pleasant words, or African Americans (AA) and unpleasant words, indicates a preference for Europeans over African Americans (AA) or vice versa. I used inferential statistics to analyze the results of the Implicit Association Test, allowing me to determine whether the participants exhibited an implicit bias towards certain hair types.

Race IAT results from participants are presented by group (race within each sample) below. The results are presented in the average IAT result for each group, from a strong preference for African Americans (AA) to a strong preference for Europeans. Each number represents one participant.

		Number of Participants				
		AA/Black	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	Middle Eastern	White
	Strong AA over European	3				
	Moderate AA over European	1	1	1		
	Slight AA over European	1	2			
	No preference	2	1			1
	Slight European over AA	2	1		1	1
	Moderate European over AA		1	1		2
	Strong European over AA			1		

Black participants showed a strong implicit bias towards African Americans, while white participants exhibited a preference for Europeans. Interestingly, the results for Hispanic and European participants were evenly spread out, with no clear preference for one race or the other.

One Middle Eastern participant showed a slight bias towards Europeans, suggesting that implicit bias is not limited to specific racial groups, but is a societal issue that affects individuals across various ethnicities. The results of the Implicit Association Test demonstrate that individuals may hold implicit biases and preferences for certain races that contribute to discrimination and discomfort experienced by Black women in particular. These biases are deeply ingrained in societal norms and standards surrounding hair texture, and they perpetuate the exclusion of Black women from traditional beauty standards.

The implications of this study are clear: we need increased education and awareness of the importance of inclusivity and diversity in beauty standards. It is not enough to simply acknowledge that diversity is important; we must actively work to challenge and dismantle the systems and beliefs that reinforce implicit biases towards certain races and hair types. This includes creating more inclusive spaces in the beauty industry, advocating for policy changes that promote diversity and inclusion, and amplifying the voices and experiences of Black women. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the IAT. Among small samples of users, the Implicit Association Test has been criticized for its limitations and potential for false results. I asked my participants whether they felt their IAT results were accurate to their beliefs and 22% of participants responded saying they felt the results were not accurate. Future research should aim to replicate and expand upon these findings, including larger and more diverse samples, as well as explore other methods to measure implicit bias. Nevertheless, this study highlights the need for continued efforts toward promoting inclusivity and diversity in beauty standards and challenging societal norms and biases that perpetuate discrimination and inequality.

Conclusion

As aforementioned research indicates, negative impressions greatly impact opportunities. Regardless of how black women choose to wear their hair, stigma towards textured hair prevents them from showing their authentic selves in the real world. Though societal views have evolved, constant exposure to the organic, textured hair of black women is crucial to the reduction of bias against textured hair.

I believe the following five steps are crucial for recognizing and minimizing these biases:

★ **Reshape restrictive and non-diverse beauty standards to encapsulate the diverse range of beauty.**

★ **Equal media representation.**

★ **Challenge discrimination by speaking out personally. Engage in discussions with friends and family members. Though uncomfortable, bringing light to unspoken issues allows them to be brought to the surface, thus challenging personal discrimination.**

★ **Seek and support inclusive brands that are actively impacting the beauty industry.**

★ **Advocation, which involves seeking and supporting resources and networks to educate others on the importance of inclusion and respect for all individuals.**

This study holds a strong potential to promote a stronger sense of unity and confidence among black women and to support the natural hair movement in its efforts to challenge and change societal attitudes and stereotypes about black women and their hair. Addressing texturism and promoting acceptance of all hair types is crucial to promoting a positive self-image and healthy self-esteem. My study aimed to isolate this issue in school environments since attitudes and behaviors learned in school set the basis for the workforce, but this is just the beginning of change among Generation Z.

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