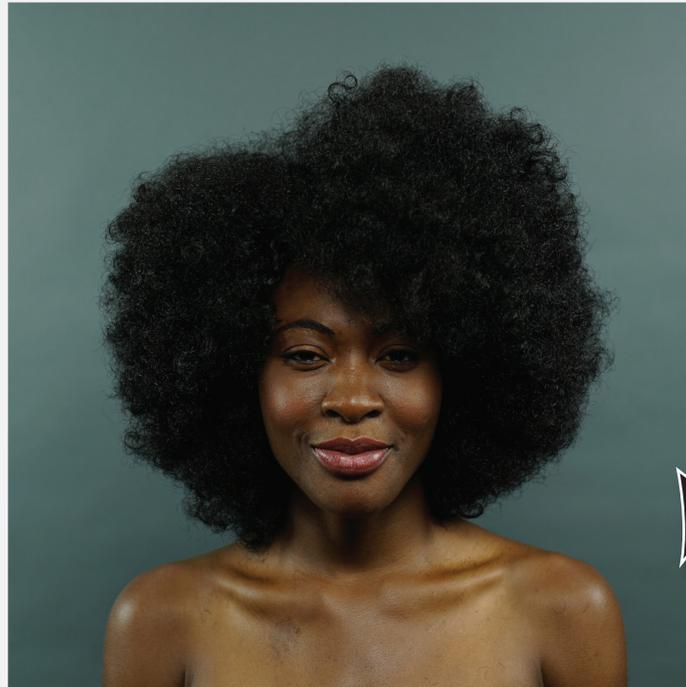




PERCEPTION INSTITUTE

Research. Representation. Reality.

textured hairstyles
or
Pleasant



smooth hairstyles
or
Unpleasant

When the items belong to a category on the left, press the **E** key. When the items belong to a category on the right, press the **I** key.

THE “GOOD HAIR” STUDY:

EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT ATTITUDES TOWARD BLACK WOMEN'S HAIR

February 2017

www.goodhairstudy.com

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THE “GOOD HAIR” STUDY:

Explicit and Implicit Attitudes Toward Black Women’s Hair

This report presents preliminary findings from the “Good Hair” Study, an original research study conducted by Perception Institute in 2016 that examined attitudes toward black women’s hair and created the first Hair Implicit Association Test (Hair IAT) to measure implicit bias against textured hair as well as an online survey to gauge explicit attitudes about how natural textured hair is perceived. Bias has been shown to correlate with discriminatory behavior such as rejection, avoidance, and abuse. As a result, the concern of this study was to determine the risk of discrimination against black women who wear their hair naturally.

WHAT IS “HAIR BIAS”?

In April 2016, SheaMoisture brand launched the provocative “Break the Walls” campaign challenging the beauty and retail industries to address the aisle ‘segregation’ of hair products by race. In most stores, hair products catering towards natural and textured hair are often located in the “ethnic” section while products designed for those with straight and smooth hair are often located in the “beauty” section. Whether or not this product placement separation is a function of intentional store policies or merely ‘de facto’ industry best practices, “Break the Walls” charged that routine black hair care product placement away from the ‘beauty’ aisle confers, at minimum, a subliminal message that naturally textured hair is inferior, less desirable, and less beautiful.

Product placement is, of course, but one manifestation of how hair standards are normalized within a larger culture of beauty. Powered by editorial, advertising, fashion, Hollywood, and social media, the beauty industry drives our visual intake daily. Our perceptions stem largely from implicit visual processes, and as a result, our brains’ repeated exposure to smooth and silky hair linked to beauty, popularity, and wealth creates associations that smooth and silky hair is the beauty default. Naturally textured hair of black women, by comparison, is notably absent within dominant cultural representation which automatically ‘otherizes’ those natural images we do see – at best they are exotic, counter cultural, or trendy; more often than not, they are marginal.

Inspired by the questions that Break the Walls raised, Perception Institute set out to explore bias within the beauty industry – specifically to identify and break the ‘mental walls’ of hair bias – negative stereotypes or attitudes that manifest unconsciously or consciously, towards natural or

textured hair. Hair bias against natural or textured hair has a distinct impact on black women for whom textured hair is their “normal.” To be clear, harms linked to racial bias against black women have been well documented – in health care, policing, education, and the workplace. Increasingly, harms related to racialized gender bias are being examined to understand why black women experience higher rates of intimate partner violence, sexual prejudice, and fear isolation more than their white counterparts.

Given what we know about other forms of bias, this study asks whether hair bias affects perceptions of beauty, self-esteem, sense of professionalism, and by extension, workplace opportunities for those whose hairstyles fall outside of the dominant norm. Moreover, if hair bias is present, do black women who wear their hair naturally perceive social stigma as it relates to their own hair choices vis-à-vis dominant norms? Last, amid a growing natural hair movement among black women, can the science offer any solutions that can help reduce bias and promote positive perceptions of natural hair, both for women themselves and among others who see them?

HOW DO WE MEASURE EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT HAIR BIAS?

Racial bias, or undue prejudice against a racial group, can manifest as explicit bias, implicit bias, or as both explicit and implicit bias. *Explicit bias* refers to the negative attitudes and beliefs we have about a racial group, deliberately formed on a conscious level. Even in our current era in which explicit bias against some groups, such as Muslims, is considered acceptable in some cases, openly anti-black racist comments continue to trigger widespread condemnation. Researchers, however, are able to measure explicit bias through survey instruments and observation.

Implicit bias refers to embedded negative stereotypes our brains automatically associate with a particular group of people. Implicit biases are often inconsistent with our conscious beliefs. That is to say, we can simultaneously reject stereotypes and endorse egalitarian values on a conscious level and also hold negative associations about others or ourselves unconsciously. Implicit bias can affect our decisions and behavior toward people of other races and, therefore, lead to differential treatment. Implicit bias is frequently measured by an Implicit Association Test (IAT) which assesses how strongly we associate certain concepts – such as race – with stereotypes or attitudes by observing how quickly or slowly

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people respond in a computer-administered categorization task (Greenwald et al., 2009). While not a tool for assessing individual behavior, the IAT has been shown to be a valuable measure for assessing broad societal attitudes which have the "potential for discriminatory impacts with very substantial societal significance" (Greenwald, Banaji & Nosek, 2015).

Over the past year, studies have provided research support for the notion that there is an explicit preference for smooth hair over natural hair (Rudman & McLean, 2016; Woolford et al., 2016); however, researchers have yet to examine implicit bias linked to hair. For the "Good Hair" Study, Perception Institute created the first natural Hair IAT and designed and conducted a national survey of women's experiences as linked to hair. Our findings provide an important backdrop to recent events related to natural hair – from legal cases on the perceived professionalism of hairstyles to the appropriateness of hairstyles in school – and have direct implications for future research and conversations related to black women's experiences. While this preliminary study presents a robust set of findings, Perception Institute will continue to collect data and analyze as the Hair IAT becomes publicly available on our website. In the future, Perception will convene and partner with researchers across disciplines to help shape and further these lines of inquiry.

WHAT IS "GOOD HAIR"?

"It means that a black person has hair that is easy to comb and style. The texture is naturally smooth and sometimes has a loose curl pattern. Easy to manage, maintain and style. Does not need a chemical or pressing to style."

"When I hear the term 'good hair,' I instantly think of racism, because people think that 'good hair or nice hair' means women with straight hair or women with hair flowing down your back. You don't see women with afros or braids as 'good hair.'"

"I hate the term, so I refuse to answer this question."

- Selected "Good Hair" Survey responses,
August 2016

For black women, hair is deeply politicized. It has served as a key marker of racial identification, a significant determinant of beauty, and a powerful visual cue for bias (Robinson, 2011; Arogundade, 2000). Tightly coiled hair texture is distinctly tied to blackness and has been a marker of black racial identity for centuries (Banks, 2000). It is simultaneously linked to beauty norms (Craig, 2006). When beauty standards are tied inextricably to race, black women experience a specific burden not experienced by either black men or women of other races (Robinson, 2011; Caldwell, 1991). **To be clear, women of other races and ethnicities who have curly or textured hair may experience pressure to conform to these beauty standards; but black women, in a sense, are often pitted against them.**

For centuries, cultural norms have racialized beauty standards – those with features characteristic of white European ancestry are considered more attractive (Robinson, 2011; Craig, 2006; Goff, Thomas & Jackson, 2008). In the United States, "good hair" is considered to be hair that is wavy or straight in texture, soft to the touch, has the ability to grow long, and requires minimal intervention by way of treatments or products to be considered beautiful. While the "good hair" standard has historical roots, it is perpetuated by pervasive cultural messages that idealize this vision of hair and offer treatments or products to achieve it.

Importantly, the culture around black women's hair is by no means monolithic. Within the past decade, the rise of the "natural hair movement" has been accompanied by a conscious rejection of dominant beauty standards and a celebration of natural hair; more concretely, there has been a 34% decline in the market value of relaxers, products that chemically straighten textured hair, since 2009. The choices black women increasingly are making to wear their hair naturally challenge traditional norms of what is appropriate, attractive, and professional. As with most choices that defy convention, these efforts to re-define norms have triggered backlash and robust debates around even among "naturalistas" themselves.

In addition to natural hair salons – where black women have typically organized around hair – communities of "naturalistas" are now online. Through hair blogs, video logs, and other forms of social media, naturalistas coach each other through transitioning (growing out relaxers) and identify the best products for their hair type. Frustrated by both the lack of consistent knowledge and the multitude of products, naturalistas have crowd-sourced support and debated about hair bias within their own ranks, sharing thoughts on colorism

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within the natural hair community and bias against tighter curl types, and what natural hair styles are considered “professional.” It is no surprise that beauty industries, both of color and mainstream, have jumped at the chance to develop products to meet the naturalista communities’ growing demands and needs, and engage in dialogue and support as well.

Yet, despite the growing natural hair movement, recent existing research suggests that the “good hair” standard may still have a meaningful effect on the way that black women are perceived and treated, depending on how they wear their hair. In 2016, Rudman and McLean measured black men and women’s explicit reactions to photos of celebrities (famous black women such as Janet Jackson, Viola Davis, and Solange Knowles) with natural and smooth hairstyles. The study found that overall, the participants preferred smooth hair, but the black women expressed no preference. Further, other researchers have recognized the potential link between hair and bias. A 2016 study by health researchers found that black adolescent girls (ages 14-17) might avoid exercise due to concerns about sweat affecting their hair. In focus groups, the girls reported that they avoided getting wet or sweating during exercise because their straightened hair became “nappy” (Woolford et al., 2016). The girls identified natural hairstyles as better for exercise but as less attractive than straightened hair. Similar to the Rudman study, when shown pictures of celebrities with various hairstyles, the girls showed a preference for longer, straighter hair.

From the perceptions of professionalism in the workplace, the first impression of a potential employer in a job interview, or the notions of healthy and beauty in every sector – attitudes toward black women’s hair can shape opportunities in these contexts, and innumerable others. It is critical, therefore, to understand how “hair bias” operates and develop solutions to disrupt and mitigate its effects.

THE “GOOD HAIR” STUDY

The “Good Hair” Study aimed to generate and compare data on implicit and explicit attitudes toward black women’s hair. The comparison between these two forms of data helps explore the racial paradox: the coexistence of positive egalitarian racial values alongside strong implicit biases favoring whiteness. This paradox demonstrates the durability of implicit bias despite conscious beliefs, and it is meaningful because implicit bias is a greater predictor of our behavior than our conscious values (Greenwald et al., 2009). In addition to attitudes, the “Good Hair” Study also explored

perceptions of social stigma and concerns that might affect women’s hair maintenance. The research included a national sample of black women, white women, black men, and white men. Additionally, we obtained a sample of black and white women who are part of an online naturalista hair community to represent responses from the natural hair movement. Our research questions and hypotheses are organized into four distinct categories: explicit bias, social stigma, hair anxiety, and implicit bias.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES

Explicit Bias

Q1: On average, what are the explicit attitudes about the beauty, attractiveness, and professionalism of black women’s textured hair? Does engagement in a naturalista community affect explicit attitudes? Do explicit attitudes about textured hair differ by generation?

Hypothesis 1: *We expected white women to consider smooth hairstyles on black women more beautiful, more sexy, and more professional compared to textured hairstyles.*

Hypothesis 2: *We expected black women in the national sample would be neutral in their ratings of beauty and sexiness, but would rate smooth hairstyles as more professional than textured hairstyles.*

Hypothesis 3: *We expected members of the naturalista community to consider textured hairstyles as more beautiful, more sexy, and more professional than smooth hairstyles.*

Hypothesis 3b: *We expected millennial naturalistas would not express explicit preferences for smooth hairstyles.*

Social Stigma

Q2: How do women perceive attitudes toward black women’s textured hair in the US?

Hypothesis 4: *Regardless of their personal explicit attitudes toward hair, we expected all women would perceive that US attitudes prefer smooth hair over textured hair.*

Hair Anxiety

Q3: To what extent do women experience concern or anxiety about hair maintenance or hold negative feelings about their hair related to exercise, intimacy, queries to have their hair touched, etc.?

Hypothesis 5: *We expected black women overall to report a greater burden of hair anxiety and related impact than white women.*

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Implicit Bias

Q4: Do we hold implicit bias related to the texture of black women’s hair?

***Hypothesis 6:** We expected to find implicit bias against black women’s textured hair compared to smooth hair in all samples.*

Q5: Does implicit bias against textured hair differ among women who are part of an online naturalista community?

***Hypothesis 7:** We expected women involved in an online naturalista community to exhibit lower levels of implicit bias against black women’s textured hair as compared to smooth hair.*

METHODOLOGY

Procedure

Perception Institute launched the “Good Hair” Study in late August 2016 and collected responses over a two-week period. Perception partnered with a research firm to recruit a large national sample of black and white women and men through an online panel. To ensure an oversample of “naturalista” women, we also recruited participants by emailing an invitation to over 235,000 women in an online natural hair community database. We specifically recruited these women so that we could examine whether the explicit and implicit attitudes of women engaged in an online, pro-natural hair community differed from those in the national sample.

Discussed in more detail below, the study contained two components: the “Good Hair” Survey and the Hair IAT. The “Good Hair” Survey, which assessed explicit attitudes toward black women’s hair and experiences related to one’s own hair, was completed by black and white women. The Hair IAT, which assessed implicit attitudes toward black women’s hair, was completed by all participants.

We recognized that the “Good Hair” Survey portion, as a self-report measure, can be affected by people’s desire to see themselves in the best possible light. To that end, we were interested to see whether the standard egalitarian norms toward race would apply to black women’s natural hair, such that when asked expressly to rate concepts such as “beautiful,” “sexy,” and “professional,” people would respond favorably to natural hair as well as smooth hair. The Hair IAT, like all measures of implicit attitudes, gave us a way to measure bias without having to rely solely on self-reports, and allowed us to compare explicit and implicit attitudes. If self-reports demonstrate positive attitudes and the IAT results illustrate negative bias, it can highlight a potential disconnect or conflict between values and behavior. If, however,

the self-reports are negative and the IAT also illustrates bias, there is cause for even deeper concern about how black women may be treated.

Participants

Altogether, 4,163 men and women completed the “Good Hair” Study: 3,475 men and women in the national sample (20% black men, 25% black women, 25% white men, 30% white women) and 688 naturalista women (68% black, 32% white). Everyone in the national sample completed the Hair IAT, and 502 women completed the “Good Hair” Survey. All 688 naturalista women completed the Hair IAT and the “Good Hair” Survey.

Hair that is textured is typically considered to be “black hair”; hair that is smooth is considered to be characteristic of “white hair.” For this initial research, we recruited only self-identified black and white participants and plan to conduct future studies in which we oversample for other groups, such as Latinos and Asian-Americans, to understand the specific dimensions of explicit and implicit attitudes within different communities. We note that a small percentage of black women reported having Native American heritage, but the numbers were not sufficiently large to allow us to reach any conclusions about these women’s specific experiences.

1. The “Good Hair” Survey: Understanding Explicit Attitudes, Social Stigma, Hair Anxiety, and Hair Experiences

The “Good Hair” Survey was organized into several sections to measure women’s explicit attitudes about black women’s textured and smooth hair and to explore the concerns, social pressures and experiences women have related to their own hair. In addition to standard race and age demographics, women also reported their hair type – from a range of textured to smooth hairstyles. Questions related to social pressures and hair experiences included: hair maintenance (e.g. frequency of hair appointments, costs associated with upkeep); inclination to engage in activities that might require redoing hair (e.g. exercise, swimming); and activities related to interpersonal engagement (e.g. social events, intimacy).

To understand explicit attitudes towards textured and smooth hair on black women, participants were shown images (see images on p. 5) of the same black woman in various hairstyles and used Likert scales to rate the beauty, sexiness, and professionalism of the hairstyle depicted in the photo. Using the same scales, participants were then

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prompted to rate each photo in terms of how most people in the US would rate each hairstyle. Including perceptions of US attitudes allows us to understand perceptions of social stigma related to textured hair.

2. The Hair Implicit Association Test (Hair IAT): Assessing Implicit Attitudes

As part of the “Good Hair” Study, Perception Institute designed the first Implicit Association Test (IAT) to assess implicit attitudes toward black women’s hair: the Hair IAT. The IAT (Greenwald et al., 1998) is a computerized task in which participants see images of faces from different identity groups and are asked to associate the images with positive and negative words. A faster association between a group and negative words indicates implicit bias against that group. Versions of the IAT have been used in thousands of research studies to measure implicit bias related to race, gender, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity. In the IAT, images appear along with pleasant (“love,” “peace,” “happy,” “laughter,” and “pleasure”) and unpleasant (“death,” “sickness,” “hatred,” “evil,” and “agony”) words (Greenwald et al., 1998). For the purposes of this study, a faster association between smooth styles and pleasant words, or between

textured styles and unpleasant words, indicates implicit bias against textured hair.

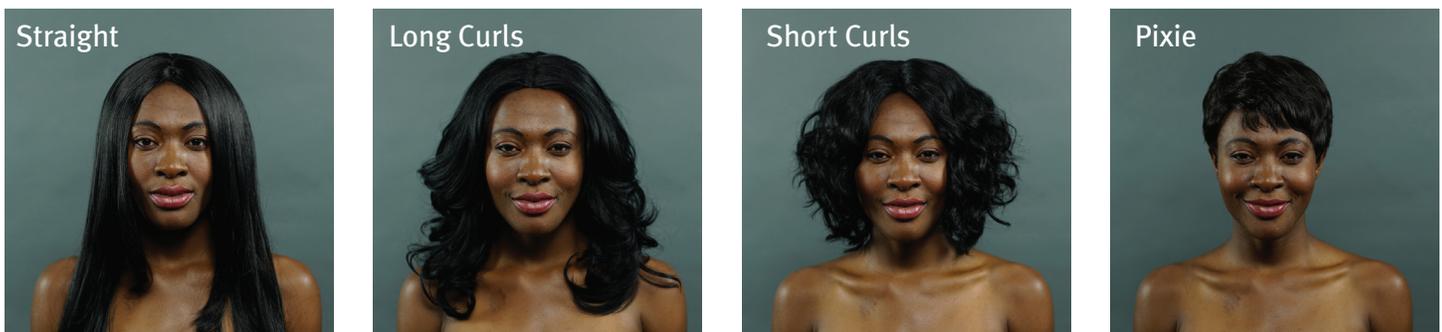
The images for the Hair IAT and the “Good Hair” Survey were created in conjunction with a creative team at SheaMoisture, a subsidiary of Sundial Brands (see images below). SheaMoisture provided the model with wigs in a number of typically worn textured (afro, dreadlocks, twist-out, braids) and smooth (straight, long curls, short curls, and pixie cut) styles, as well as a makeup and hairstyle artist to showcase both the model and the hairstyle in the best possible light. To ensure the key factor being assessed was hair, the same model was pictured wearing all of the hairstyles. The same images of the woman were used in both the Hair IAT and in the “Good Hair” Survey of explicit attitudes.

The model in the images was chosen from a set of black and white models that had been previously validated for attractiveness. The process for validation involved rating model headshots through an online review panel. Attractiveness ratings are typically used for comparison among subjects, and a component of the original study design included evaluating implicit bias toward a white model wearing the same textured and smooth wigs as the black model. While the findings presented here are related to hair textures on the black

IMAGES OF TEXTURED STYLES



IMAGES OF SMOOTH STYLES



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model, the validation remains relevant to the methodology, as it allows us to claim that neither race, nor perceptions of attractiveness, influenced the IAT results. The only variable in the IAT that changes is hair texture.

RESULTS

Who Took the Survey & How do They Wear Their Hair?

502 women in the national sample (51% black, 49% white) completed the “Good Hair” Survey. In the national sample, 52% of black women currently wear their hair in a natural style, and 48% wear a smooth style. The most common hairstyles are relaxed (29%), braids (14%), wash-and-go (10%), and afro (10%). 31% of white women currently wear their hair in a natural style, and 69% wear a smooth style. The most common hairstyles are relaxed (45%), wash-and-go (25%), loose curls (10%), and smooth waves (9%).

688 women in the naturalista community (68% black, 32% white) completed the “Good Hair” Survey. 75% of black women currently wear their hair in a natural style, and 25% wear a smooth style. The most common hairstyles are braids (16%), afro (16%), twist-out (15%), and wash-and-go (15%) – only 12% of black women in the naturalista community have relaxed hair. 39% of white women currently wear their hair in a natural style, and 61% wear a smooth style. The most common hairstyles are wash-and-go (30%), relaxed (27%), loose curls (20%), and smooth waves (11%).

79% of black millennial (under age 30) naturalistas currently wear their hair in a natural style. The most common hairstyles are braids (26%), afro (18%), twist-out (12%), and wash-and-go (11%) – only 6.5% of black millennial naturalistas have relaxed hair.

DO WOMEN HAVE EXPLICIT BIAS AGAINST BLACK WOMEN’S TEXTURED HAIR?

- ◆ **On average, white women show explicit bias toward black women’s textured hair.** They rate it as less beautiful, less sexy/attractive, and less professional than smooth hair.
- ◆ **Black women in the natural hair community have significantly more positive attitudes toward textured hair than other women, including black women in the national sample.**
- ◆ **Millennial naturalistas have more positive attitudes toward textured hair than all other women.**
- ◆ **Black women perceive a level of social stigma against textured hair, and this perception is substantiated by white women’s devaluation of natural hairstyles.**

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PERSONAL ATTITUDES

502 women in the national sample and 688 women from the natural hair community rated each hairstyle on a scale from 1 to 5 in terms of how beautiful, sexy/attractive, and professional they thought it was.

We compared the scores of women in the national sample and natural hair community, by race (national sample: 255 black women and 247 white women; natural hair community: 468 black women and 220 white women).

We illustrate explicit attitudes toward textured and smooth hairstyles by showing detailed findings toward the afro (textured) and long waves (smooth). Findings related to the other six hairstyles are available in an Appendix available at www.goodhairstudy.com.

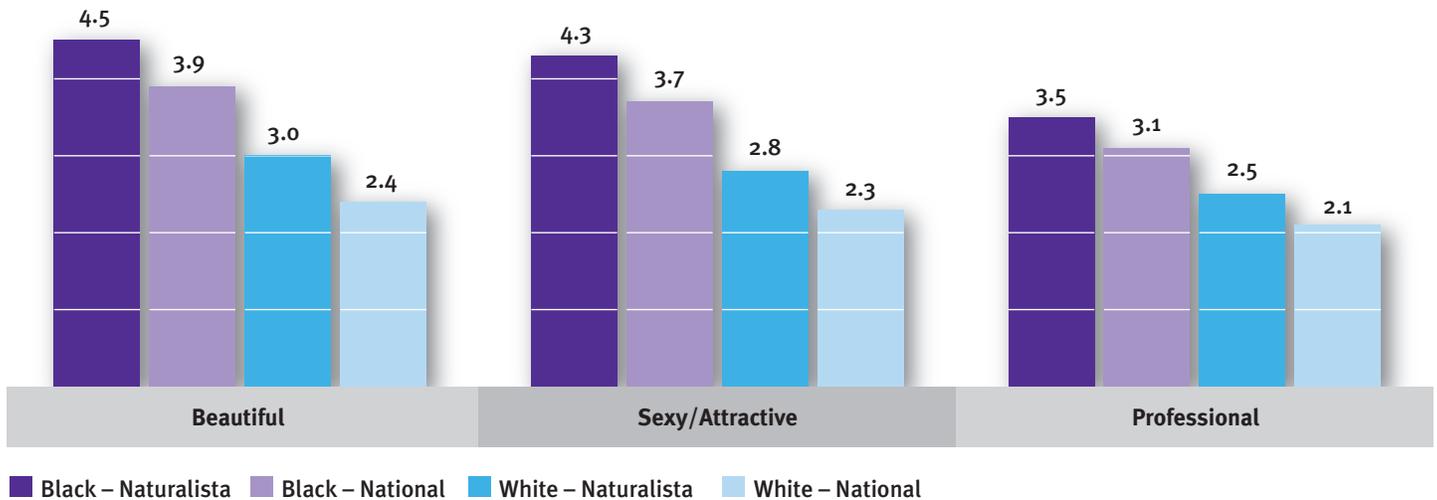
Table 1 represents the average ratings toward the afro hairstyle, by racial group. The findings demonstrate that black women overall rate the afro significantly more positively on each of the characteristics than white women ($p < .001$).

As Figure 1 illustrates, black naturalistas hold the most positive attitudes toward the afro hairstyle – their attitudes are significantly more positive than black women in the national sample ($p < .001$), as well as white naturalistas ($p < .001$), on ratings of beauty, sexy/attractiveness, and professionalism. While their ratings are lower than black women in the national sample, white naturalistas hold significantly more positive attitudes toward the afro hairstyle than white women in the national sample, on all characteristics ($p < .001$).

TABLE 1. AVERAGE ATTITUDES TOWARD TEXTURED HAIR – AFRO

	Black Women	White Women
Beautiful	4.3	2.6
Sexy/Attractive	4.1	2.5
Professional	3.4	2.3

FIGURE 1. EXPLICIT ATTITUDES TOWARD TEXTURED HAIR, BY GROUP – AFRO



THE "GOOD HAIR" STUDY:

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FIGURE 2. EXPLICIT ATTITUDES TOWARD SMOOTH HAIR, BY GROUP – LONG CURLS

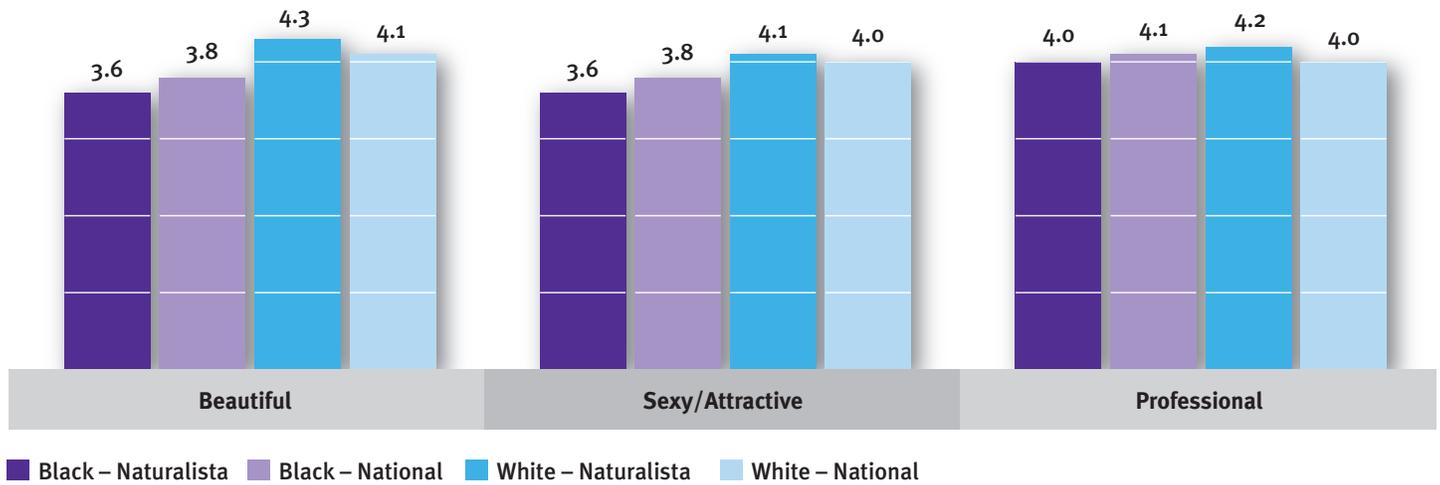


Table 2 represents the average ratings toward the long curls hairstyle, by racial group. The findings demonstrate that white women overall rate long curls as significantly more beautiful and sexy/attractive than black women ($p < .001$). Black and white women rate long curls as equally professional.

As Figure 2 illustrates, black women in the national and naturalista samples rate long curls as similarly sexy/attractive and professional, but black women in the national sample rate long curls as significantly more beautiful than black women in the naturalista sample ($p < .05$). White women in the two samples rate long curls as similarly beautiful and

sexy/attractive, but white women in the naturalista sample rate long curls as significantly more professional than white women in the national sample ($p < .01$).

TABLE 2. AVERAGE ATTITUDES TOWARD SMOOTH HAIR – LONG CURLS

	Black Women	White Women
Beautiful	3.7	4.2
Sexy/Attractive	3.7	4.1
Professional	4.0	4.1

ARE MILLENNIAL NATURALISTAS DIFFERENT?

With the growing presence and embrace of natural hair in recent years, we examined attitudes among "millennial naturalistas" – black women under age 30 in the natural hair community. Attitude surveys by Pew focused on millennials have found that this generation (defined as the American teens and twenty-somethings who are reaching their adulthood at the start of a new millennium) differs in significant respects from earlier generations (Pew Research Center, 2015). They self-define through social media and identify as progressive, confident, self-expressive, and open to change. With respect to millennials' explicit and implicit attitudes linked to race, the research is equivocal, with some studies showing lower levels of bias than previous generations and others showing little difference.

In our study, millennial naturalistas have significantly more positive attitudes toward textured hair, across all textured hairstyles. Their ratings are well above other black women (see Appendix, available at www.goodhairstudy.com, for ratings). While millennials rate textured hairstyles relatively more positively than smooth hairstyles, they, too, rate smooth hairstyles as more professional than textured hairstyles.

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SOCIAL STIGMA

502 women in the national sample and 688 women from the natural hair community rated each hairstyle on a scale from 1 to 5 in terms of how beautiful, sexy/attractive, and professional they thought the US would rate the hairstyle.

We compared the scores of women in the national sample and natural hair community, by race (national sample: 255 black women and 247 white women; natural hair community: 468 black women and 220 white women).

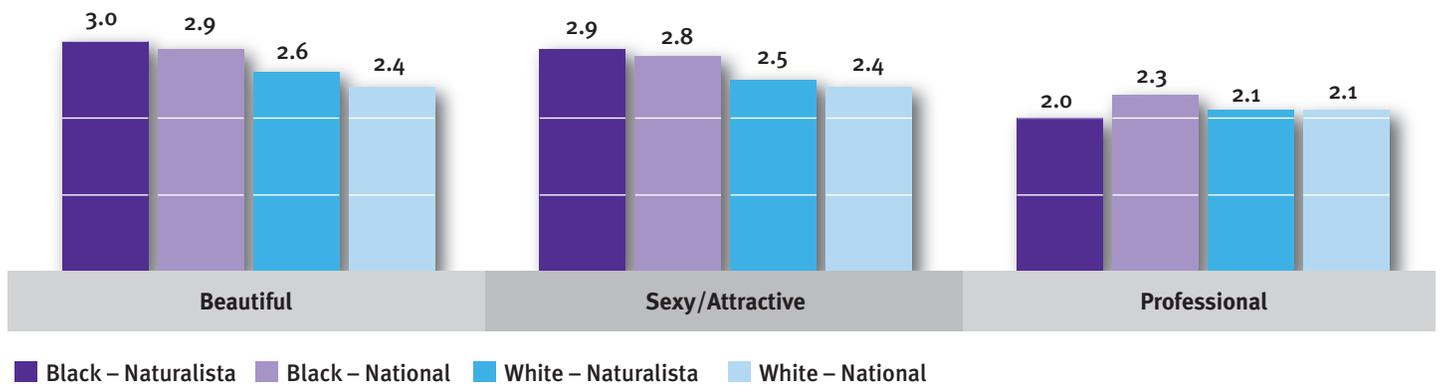
Table 3 represents the average perceptions of US attitudes toward the afro hairstyle, by racial group. The findings demonstrate that white women perceive the US to rate the afro significantly more negatively on beauty and sexy/attractiveness than black women ($p < .001$). Black and white women perceive that the US rates the afro similarly low on professionalism.

As Figure 3 illustrates, while black naturalistas and black women in the national sample have similar perceptions of US attitudes linked to beauty and sexy/attractiveness of the afro, black naturalistas perceive that the US thinks the afro is significantly less professional ($p < .01$). White women in the national and naturalista samples have similar perceptions of US attitudes toward the afro.

TABLE 3. AVERAGE PERCEIVED ATTITUDES TOWARD TEXTURED HAIR – AFRO

	Black Women	White Women
Beautiful	2.9	2.5
Sexy/Attractive	2.9	2.4
Professional	2.1	2.1

FIGURE 3. PERCEIVED ATTITUDES TOWARD TEXTURED HAIR, BY GROUP – AFRO



THE "GOOD HAIR" STUDY:

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FIGURE 4. PERCEIVED ATTITUDES TOWARD SMOOTH HAIR – LONG CURLS

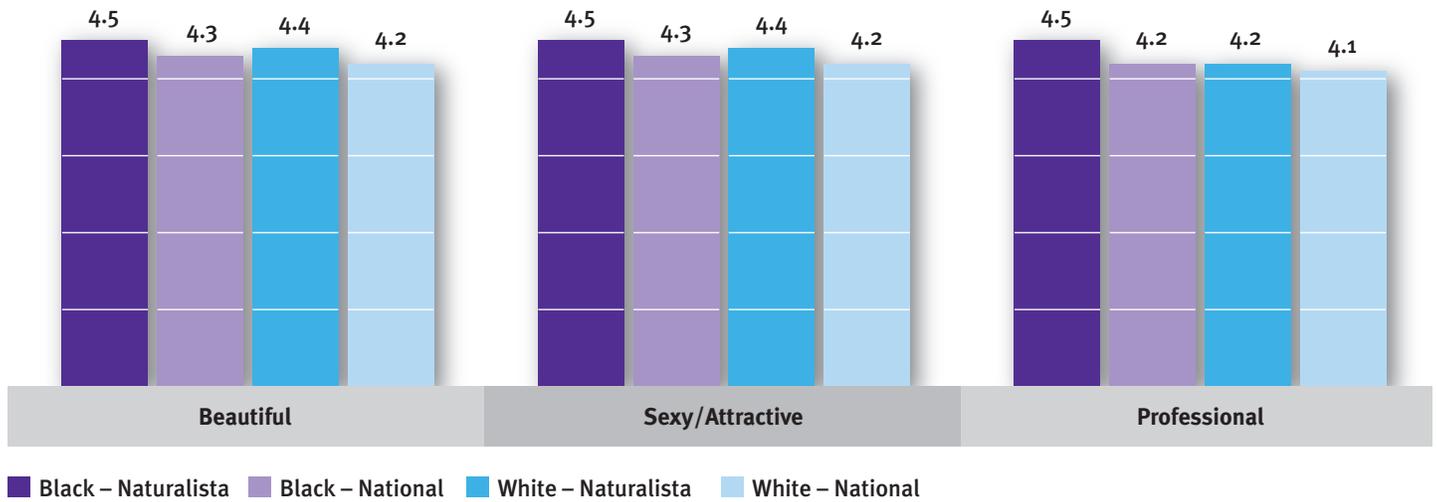


Table 4 represents the average perceptions of US attitudes toward the long curls hairstyle, by racial group. The findings demonstrate that black women perceive the US to rate the long curls significantly more positively on beauty and sexy/attractiveness than white women ($p < .001$). Black and white women perceive the US to rate long curls as similarly high on professionalism.

As Figure 4 illustrates, black naturalistas perceive that the US rates long curls as significantly more beautiful, sexy/attractive, and professional than black women in the national

sample (all $p < .01$). White naturalistas perceive that the US rates long curls as significantly more beautiful and sexy/attractive than white women in the national sample ($p < .001$).

TABLE 4. AVERAGE PERCEIVED ATTITUDES TOWARD SMOOTH HAIR – LONG CURLS

	Black Women	White Women
Beautiful	4.5	4.3
Sexy/Attractive	4.4	4.3
Professional	4.4	4.2

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WHAT IS “GOOD HAIR” ANYWAY?

“My hair.”

- Black woman, naturalista, age 47

“Hair that is acceptable to the majority of society. Smooth and silky to touch.”

- Black woman, age 50

- *Selected “Good Hair” Survey responses, August 2016*

As part of the “Good Hair” Survey, we asked women what “good hair” means to them. Overall, women described “good hair” as hair that is manageable and is healthy. The emphasis was on the texture of the hair: women describe “good hair” as straight, smooth, silky, and soft, not frizzy or “kinky.” They emphasize that this is hair someone has naturally – “no chemicals needed.” Some women link good hair to whiteness, explaining that the “good hair” standard is based on the type of hair that white women have, and is often hair that biracial women have.

HAIR ANXIETY

The “good hair” standard is powerful in shaping social perceptions of hair and black women’s experiences in relation to this norm. In our study, we found that **almost all women worry about their hair to some extent, but black women experience high levels of anxiety more than**

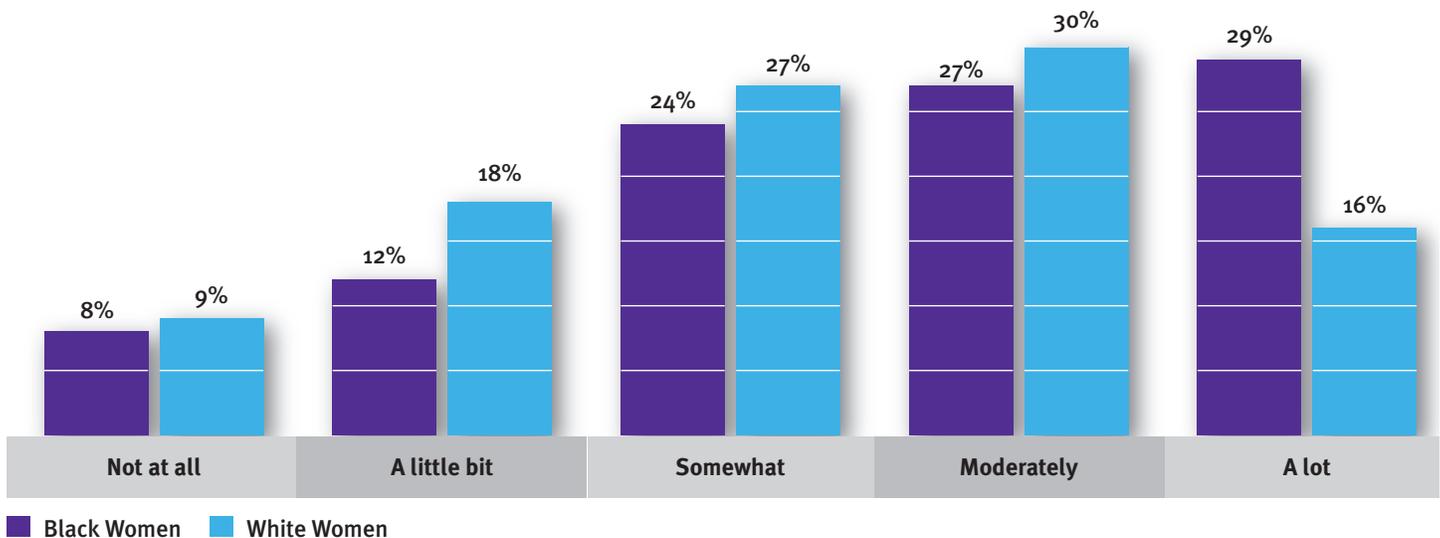
white women. Stories about black women not swimming or exercising because of hair maintenance abound. The “Good Hair” Study found that hair is a critical factor in these decisions: **one in three black women report that their hair is the reason they haven’t exercised, compared to one in ten white women.**

The study also found that hair styling and maintenance is a greater financial and social burden for black women than white women, which may affect choices about various activities. For example,

- ◆ Black women are more likely to report spending more time on their hair than white women.
- ◆ Black women are more likely to report having professional styling appointments more often than white women.
- ◆ Black women are more likely to report spending more money on products for their hair than white women.
- ◆ One in four black women have difficulty finding products for their hair—more than half have not been able to find products for their hair at some point.

We asked women, *how much do you worry about your hair?* As demonstrated in Figure 5, black women report a greater burden of anxiety related to their hair than white women.

FIGURE 5. HAIR ANXIETY



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We asked women, *How comfortable are you with someone touching your hair?* As illustrated in Figure 6, black women report greater discomfort with someone touching their hair.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED PROFESSIONAL?

Most significantly, hair choices take on distinct meaning in professional contexts. Women were asked if they would wear each of the hairstyles for a professional commitment. As seen in Figure 7, black women show a preference for smooth hairstyles, suggesting that they are considered more acceptable than textured hairstyles in professional contexts.

Women were also asked whether they feel pressure related to their hairstyle at work. **One in five black women feel social pressure to straighten their hair for work - twice as many as white women.**

FIGURE 6. COMFORT WITH SOMEONE TOUCHING YOUR HAIR

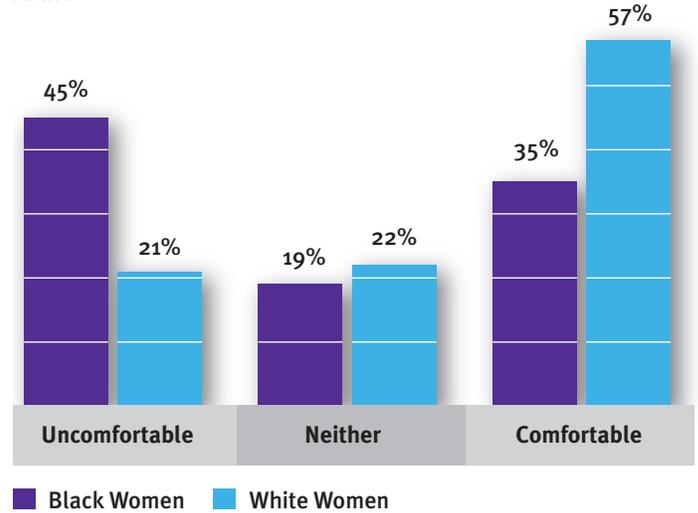
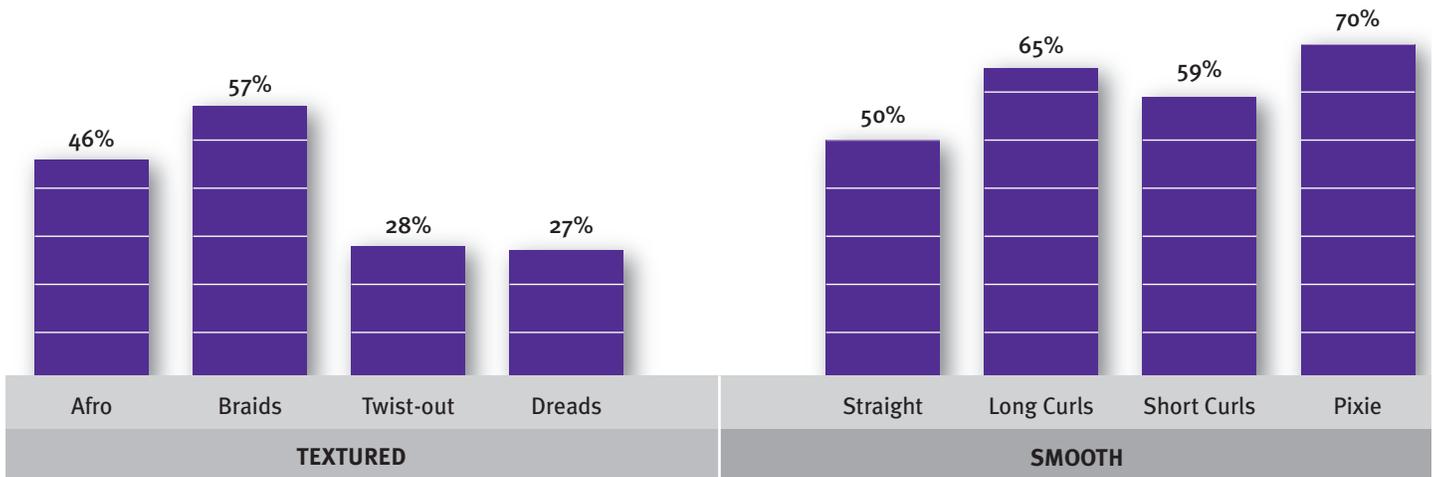


FIGURE 7. PROFESSIONALISM - I WOULD WEAR THIS HAIRSTYLE FOR A PROFESSIONAL EVENT



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TABLE 5. HAIR IAT RESULTS – IMPLICIT ATTITUDES TOWARD BLACK WOMEN’S HAIR

	National Sample				Natural Hair Community	
	Black Men	White Men	Black Women	White Women	Black Women	White Women
Average IAT Score	-0.31	-0.49	-0.39	-0.6	-0.08	-0.49
Interpretation of IAT Score	<i>Slight-to-moderate pro-smooth</i>	<i>Moderate pro-smooth</i>	<i>Moderate pro-smooth</i>	<i>Moderate-to-strong pro-smooth</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Moderate pro-smooth</i>
Percentage Breakdown						
Slight pro-texture	18%	5%	13%	3%	33%	5%
Neutral	18%	13%	17%	4%	22%	12%
Slight pro-smooth	17%	13%	14%	13%	17%	20%
Moderate pro-smooth	20%	33%	22%	37%	14%	24%
Strong pro-smooth	28%	36%	34%	44%	14%	39%

Note: Conventional d score cut-offs were used: “strong” (>0.65), “moderate” (0.35-0.64), “slight” (0.15-0.34), and “neutral” (0-0.14) (Greenwald, Nosek & Banaji, 2003)

DO WE HAVE IMPLICIT BIAS AGAINST NATURAL HAIR?

- ◆ **A majority of participants, regardless of race, show implicit bias against textured hair.**
- ◆ **Black women who are part of an online natural hair community are more likely to show a preference for black women’s textured hair.**
- ◆ **White women in the natural hair community are three times more likely to be neutral than white women in the national sample, though the majority still show preference for smooth hair.**

Results from the Hair IAT demonstrate what we hypothesized – that many of us hold implicit bias against textured hair.

Among men and women, white participants show stronger levels of implicit bias against textured hair than black participants. White women in the natural hair community are three times more likely to be neutral than white women in the national sample, but the majority still show preference for smooth hair.

A majority of black women in the natural hair community show either no bias or a slight preference for textured hair. A third of black women show preference for textured hair.

Table 5 provides a summary of the IAT results. The results are presented in three forms: the average IAT score for each subgroup, the scientific interpretation of the average score, and the breakdown of the percentage of people within

the subgroup who hold each level of bias, from slight pro-texture to strong pro-smooth. We draw attention to the large proportion of naturalista black women who are pro-texture, as contrasted to black women in the national sample, and the large proportions of white women who are pro-smooth – these are circled in red.

DISCUSSION

How women wear their hair matters both personally and professionally. However, the attitudes and biases with respect to textured hairstyles for black women is distinct and acute, and will have different implications depending on who holds the bias, what hairstyle choices they are making, and what social pressure they are navigating.

Our hypotheses regarding black women in the national sample were confirmed and reveal a “hair paradox”: on average, they have positive explicit attitudes toward textured hair, but the majority have implicit bias against textured hair. They also experience significant social pressure to keep hair maintained and straight for professional reasons.

A critical finding of this study is that black women in the natural hair community do not suffer from this paradox. They have positive explicit attitudes toward textured hair – a full third show implicit preference for textured hair, and on average they are equally positive toward textured and smooth hair. **Black women in the natural hair community have more positive implicit and explicit attitudes toward textured hair than all other women, even black women in the national sample who say they are part of the “natural hair movement.”** The differences in implicit

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attitudes between black women from the national sample who self report being part of the “natural hair movement” and those who are active participants in an online natural hair community raises interesting implications for the role that engagement in an online community that visually celebrates textured hair plays in affecting implicit attitudes. In light of the current emphasis in the social psychological literature of rigorously scrutinizing possibly effective methods for reducing bias (Lai et al., 2014), the findings that engagement with the community, beyond just personal ideas about natural hair, may be a method of reducing implicit biases and warrants further study.

With the growing presence and embrace of natural hair in recent years, we examined attitudes among millennials (women under age 30) compared to older women. Millennials have more positive implicit and explicit attitudes toward textured hair than older women, suggesting there may be a generational difference in perception of natural hair.

In contrast, white women demonstrate bias – both explicit and implicit – against textured hair. White women rate textured hairstyles less favorably than smooth hairstyles, and their ratings are lower than black women’s. White women in the online natural hair community demonstrate less bias (explicit and implicit) toward natural hair than other white women but still hold higher levels of bias than both white and black men, as well as black women in the national sample.

Implicit and explicit biases in this study demonstrate the impact of the “good hair” standard on the way black

women’s natural hair is perceived. In a world dominated by this standard, black women experience more anxiety related to their hair and greater social burdens of hair maintenance.

In a sense, white women penalize natural hair, and black women recognize this stigma.

None of us are immune to this cultural norm, but being a part of an affirming natural hair community may be linked to more positive attitudes toward natural hair.

This study is just the beginning of the necessary work of examining hair bias and its many impacts, from black women’s self-image to others’ perceptions of beauty and professionalism. As decades of implicit bias research has shown, perceptions have meaningful implications for opportunities. From the classroom to the workplace, bias against natural hair can undermine the ability for black women to be their full selves, regardless of how they choose to wear their hair. As cultural messages continue to shift around textured hair, cultural images and exposure to the natural textured hair throughout the beauty industry will be essential to helping reduce bias against natural hair.

Finally, existing research on implicit bias serves as an important foundation for identifying how to counter bias against natural hair – but innovation is necessary. The design and implementation of new strategies – such as the Hair IAT – is key to furthering an intersectional conversation of bias. This study demonstrates how we can use new metrics to drive new conversations.

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This report presents preliminary findings from the “Good Hair” Study, an original research study conducted by Perception Institute in 2016 that examined attitudes toward black women’s hair. The “Good Hair” Study created the first Hair Implicit Association Test (Hair IAT) to measure implicit bias against textured hair as well as an online survey to gauge explicit attitudes about how textured hair is perceived. Bias has been shown to correlate with discriminatory behavior such as rejection, avoidance, and abuse. As a result, the concern of this study was to determine the risk of discrimination against black women who wear their hair naturally.

