

DIFFERENCES IN HAIR SIGNIFICANCE AMONG BLACK AND WHITE WOMEN:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON BLACK HAIR

By

Yasmine S. Keen

A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Psychology: Academic Research

Committee Membership

Dr. Christopher L. Aberson, Committee Chair

Dr. Amber M. Gaffney, Committee Member

Dr. Gregg J. Gold, Committee Member

Dr. Christopher L. Aberson, Program Graduate Coordinator

May 2018

Abstract

DIFFERENCES IN HAIR SIGNIFICANCE AMONG BLACK AND WHITE WOMEN: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON BLACK HAIR

Yasmine S. Keen

In Western culture, standards of beauty are often based on European characteristics that Black women are inherently unable to meet. African American history and anecdotal accounts suggest that hair in particular can have a significant impact on the perception and body image of Black women, though whether that impact is positive or negative is not clear. The current study takes a quantitative approach to examining women's relationship with their hair. Black women ($n = 146$) and White women ($n = 1,116$) participated in an anonymous online survey regarding time devoted to hair maintenance, money spent on hair upkeep, activities hindered by hair choices, overall happiness with hair, and perceived social attitudes. Black women generally took more time to achieve their most worn hair style and spent more money on hair products than did White women, but did not report a higher level of perceived lifestyle or monetary burden. Black women were also happier with their hair than White women despite reportedly feeling that others judged Black hair more negatively. Black women with non-straight/low maintenance hairstyles (e.g., an afro or braids) were both happier and experienced fewer lifestyle and monetary burdens than those with straight/high maintenance hairstyles (e.g., straightened

with heat or weaved). Results suggest that Black women who fall further from the European beauty ideals surrounding hair are less affected by those ideals.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
List of Tables	vii
List of Appendices	viii
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	3
Black Hair	3
Black Women and other Racially Defined Features.....	5
Facial Features.	5
Skin Color	6
Weight.....	7
Racial Differences and the European Beauty Ideal	8
Statement of the Problem.....	9
Hypotheses and Research Questions	11
Hypothesis 1: Racial Differences	11
Hypothesis 1a.....	11
Hypothesis 1b.....	11
Hypothesis 1c.....	11
Hypothesis 1d.....	11
Hypothesis 1e.....	11
Hypothesis 1f	11
Hypothesis 2: Hair Differences.....	12

Hypothesis 2a.....	12
Hypothesis 2b.....	12
Research Question 1: Hair Differences	12
Research question 1a.....	12
Research question 1b	12
Research question 1c.....	12
Research question 1d	12
Justification.....	13
Method	15
Participants.....	15
Instrumentation	15
Demographics.	15
Hair Experiences.	15
Results.....	17
Hypothesis 1a-1f.....	17
Hypothesis 1a – Time	17
Hypothesis 1b – Money part 1	17
Hypothesis 1c – Money part 2	18
Hypothesis 1d – Hindrance.....	18
Hypothesis 1e – Happiness	18
Hypothesis 1f – Perceived social acceptance.....	18
Hypothesis 2a-2b and Research Questions 1a-1d.....	19
Hypothesis 2a – Time	19

Hypothesis 2b – Hindrance	20
Research Question 1a – Money part 1	20
Research Question 1b – Money part 2	20
Research Question 1c – Happiness	20
Research Question 1d – Perceived Social Acceptance	21
Discussion	22
Racial Differences	22
Hair Style Differences	24
Limitations	26
Conclusions	27
References	28
Appendices	32

List of Tables

Table 1. Monetary Burden Scale	37
Table 2. Hindrance Scale	38
Table 3. Happiness Scale	39
Table 4. Perceived Social Acceptance Scale	39

List of Appendices

Appendix A.....	32
Appendix B.....	34

Introduction

In Western society there is pressure for women to meet certain beauty ideals. These ideals are often established by different types of media and emphasize European characteristics, such as light skin and straight or wavy hair (e.g., Collins, 2004; Oney, Cole, & Sellers, 2011). Black women often fall short of this ideal. They are typically heavier than White women, their skin is darker, their facial features are different, and their hair often has a tightly coiled (i.e., kinky) texture (e.g., Hall, 1995; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, & Ward, 1987).

Hair in particular has a social significance that goes beyond a person's personal preference. It is traditionally viewed as a symbol that can infer social status or to make a statement about oneself (Banks, 2000). Hair is particularly important for women. How a woman chooses to wear her hair can greatly impact public opinion of her overall beauty. For example, long hair is traditionally considered feminine, and therefore beautiful, while short is not (Patton, 2006). One's degree of femininity helps determine how beautiful others will consider her (Banks, 2000). Sociologists, feminists, and proponents of Afrocentric theory claim that the social implications surrounding hair are more relevant for Black women than for White women (Hall, 1995; White, 2005).

While there is qualitative evidence (Banks, 2000; White, 2005), editorials (Cook, 2012; Ross, 2011), and online surveys (Adrienne, 2012) that discuss the topic of hair among Black women, not much in terms of quantitative research exists. All of these sources lead to a general conclusion; hair experiences are important to Black women.

Furthermore, those experiences may be more complex than those that pertain to White women.

Hair is fundamentally different for those of African descent when compared to the hair of almost every other ethnicity. It usually has a coarse, coiled, naturally dry texture that is not easy to manage (Banks, 2000). It is difficult and often painful to comb in its natural state, which in turn means it can take a substantial amount of time to style. Regardless of the style choice, there is always an issue of maintenance. Braiding, while lasting months with little maintenance, can take hours to complete. Pressing with a hot comb or straightening with a flat iron requires a steady hand, high amounts of hair-damaging heat, frequent touch ups, and an avoidance of water in order to retain the style. Chemical relaxers strip the hair of its natural texture and can cause burns on the scalp, and failure to touch up new growth can result in hair breakage. Natural hair, if kept long, requires frequent and time-consuming detangling and proper care to avoid dryness and breakage. Most Black women do not have the luxury of being able to easily pull a comb through her hair or put her hair into a ponytail day in and day out for any easy fix.

Literature Review

Black Hair

What is deemed acceptable fashion is an issue among people of African descent that dates back to the period of slavery in the United States, when a hierarchy of skin and hair was created. Lighter skin and wavy hair was generally the preference for house slaves while dark skinned and kinky haired slaves were made to work in the field (Bond & Cash, 1992; Patton, 2006). European features in Black slaves were considered desirable among White slave owners. Such features also led to more opportunities, such as access to goods, education, or the ability to “pass” as a free person.

In the early 1900s, Madame C.J. Walker introduced tools (e.g., hair softeners, pressing combs, and beauty schools) to help Black women manage their hair (Banks, 2000). Suddenly the straight look was accessible to and sought after by Black women. Literature regarding the implications of Madam C.J. Walker’s contributions has mixed views. White (2005) claims that the introduction of hair softeners and pressing combs gave Black women the ability to strip themselves of their natural, “bad” hair and instead have “good” hair that was straight and fit the White beauty standard. Black leaders, such as W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington felt that straightening hair was a form of self-hate and that Black people needed to embrace their natural curl pattern rather than adhere to a traditionally White norm (Patton, 2006). However, Patton argues that straightening hair in the Black community was more often seen as having a modern hairstyle rather than attempting to look White.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, hair straightening was briefly rejected in favor of natural styles (Banks, 2000; Patton, 2006). The Black Power movement that arose during this period prompted Black people to take pride in their Africanness. This included wearing large afros and praise for dark skin. During this period, hairstyles became a political statement among Blacks. Those involved in the movement sought to prove that “blackness” was just as good as “whiteness,” and that assimilation was both unnecessary and a form of self-hatred (Hall, 1995).

Today, Black women have a plethora of options when it comes to style their hair. Styles deviating from the standard of “straight” are more accepted today than they have been in the past. However, in the 1980s both Hyatt Hotels and American airlines were sued over policies that banned braids among their employees because the style was deemed inappropriate. Dreadlocks, braids, and cornrows were banned from a Chicago middle school in 1996 because the school believed that the styles were potentially “gang related” (Banks, 2000). In 2012 a hostess at a Hooters restaurant in the southern United States recounted how she and her fellow Black employees were told that natural hair was not “glamorous” enough for the establishment (Cook, 2012). Black workers who intended to abandon their chemical relaxers and grow out their natural hair were discouraged from doing so. Recently, a young Black girl attending a Christian school in Florida faced expulsion due to her decision to wear her hair long and natural. The school accused her of being a distraction because of her hair, which went against their dress code (Lee, 2013).

Some Black women that have “gone natural” claim that family members and friends do not support their choice. Alicia Nicole Walton, a psychotherapist and writer of a natural hair care blog, says her father felt that natural hair would ruin her chance of getting into graduate school and having a good career (Ross, 2011). Her story is similar to many documented by both Banks (2000) and White (2005). White (2005) interviewed 14 Black women of high social status that all wore their hair naturally and none felt their hair hindered them in their ability to achieve their status. Resistance towards natural hair is a common theme when discussions on Black hair arise, but there is no evidence to suggest that hair actually affects opportunity.

Banks (2000), Hall (1995), Okazawa-Rey et al. (1987), and White (2005) all argue that hair, like skin color, could have a profound effect on social and economic opportunities. These instances show that traditionally Black hairstyles are not understood or accepted in some industries. Black women in particular are affected by those beliefs. Ethnographic studies suggest that some Black women may have internalized the belief that deviations from straight hairstyles will make it more difficult to move up in society despite little to no evidence that hair actually makes a difference.

Black Women and other Racially Defined Features

Facial Features. Not much research on the impact of facial features on Black attitudes towards beauty exists. In the United States, the norm is to have thin lips and a small nose but Black features usually include full lips and wide noses (Hall, 1995). Hall (1995) discusses one dissertation from 1988 by a student named Neal who found that

women with Caucasian features are perceived as having more positive life outcomes than those with more African features. A study by Jefferson and Stake (2009) grouped facial features (e.g., lips, nose, and skin color) with hair texture, calling these "racially defined features" (p. 397) White women actually rated their racially defined features to be further from their own ideal than did Black women. Still, studies consider facial features in terms of the western European beauty ideal.

Skin Color. Issues regarding skin color closely parallel those regarding hair. Historically Black slaves with lighter skin were chosen to work as house servants, giving them privilege over dark skinned slaves sent to work in the fields (Hall, 1995). The free Black elite were often those of mixed race and straighter hair. They became the picture of success to Blacks, and their physical features were associated with rising in society (Lindsey, 2011). Since then, lighter skin has been considered "better skin."

As Black women were encouraged to use new products to straighten their hair, advertisers also targeted Blacks for skin bleaching treatments. Products promising straight hair and lighter skin appeared regularly in Black journals and newspapers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Light skin and straight, long hair became synonymous with beauty and success (Gooden, 2011). 42% of the advertisements from the February 1930 issue of *The Chicago Defender*, a prominent Black publication, focused on skin lightening and hair straightening products (Gooden, 2011). From 1918 to 1922, nine out of 14 women on the cover of the Black journal *The Crusader* had light skin and long hair. Three more had long hair and a dark skin tone (Gooden, 2011).

Bond and Cash (1992) found that, regardless of their own skin color, Black women believed that Black men prefer light skin. If given the chance to change their skin color, 47% of women would not change and 36% would go lighter as opposed to darker. Dark and light skinned women internalized ideals closer to their own skin colors, but medium-skinned women tended to have ideals far lighter than their own complexions.

Despite a general belief among Blacks that lighter is better, there does not seem to be evidence that dark-skinned women are less satisfied than light-skinned women with their skin color (Bond & Cash, 1992). Bond and Cash theorized that dark-skinned women fail to internalize a light-skinned ideal because they are so far from that ideal themselves. Hall (1995) believed that it is possible that dark-skinned women are simply uninfluenced by external forces due to being "strong women who respect and like themselves."

Weight. The majority of studies about body image among Black women have focused on weight (Hall, 1995). Black women on average are heavier than White women (Jefferson & Stake, 2009) and the western European Beauty ideal favors thinness (Mazur, 1986). Despite this discrepancy, Black women are usually less concerned with their weight than White women (Greenwood & Dal Cin, 2012). This may be due to differences in cultural ideals, where Black culture favors curvier women. However, in a study on body image among Black women, the majority of participants (60.4%) felt that they were too fat (Thomas, 1989). Women that felt they were the right weight reported higher levels of happiness and body satisfaction.

Racial Differences and the European Beauty Ideal

In the United States, popular culture has favored slightly larger hips and a much larger bust coupled with a small waist (Mazur, 1986). For example, from 1940 to 1985, Miss America contestants became progressively taller, thinner, and bustier. While smaller breasts and larger hips was the norm of the 1940s, the ideal size of a woman's hips has decreased slightly while her breast size has increased, putting the ideal woman at a level where both her breasts and hips have a similar measurement. This ideal is the typical "hourglass" shape, where a woman has bust and hip measurements much larger than her waist measurement.

In Black culture, a more curvy body type seems to be preferred (Collins 2004; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, & Ward, 1987; Oney, Cole, & Sellers, 2011) whereas White women tend to seek slimmer shapes. However, similarly to White culture, Black culture idealizes straighter hair and lighter skin tones as opposed to kinky hair and darker skin tones (Bond & Cash, 1992). This may suggest that some westernized beauty characteristics have a higher importance to Black women and greater impact on Black beauty attitudes than others.

Statement of the Problem

Failure to meet the society's standard may result in unfavorable body attitudes in Black women. However, research continuously finds that Black women have more positive body attitudes than White women (Jefferson & Stake, 2009). Black women also report lower body surveillance, less concern with the approval of others, and less concern over weight (Hall, 1995; Greenwood & Dal Cin, 2012). Such research has led some to believe that Black women are not affected by the influence of western European beauty ideals and have less concern over their body image, which is likely not the case. Little is known about the influence of the western European ideal on other features that differ greatly between White and Black women (Hall, 1995). If Black women tend to be happier with their hair despite an innate inability to conform to the western European beauty ideal, it would be useful to examine which factors relate to the resistance of the ideal.

Hair should relate to body image as other physical features (e.g., weight) do. However, the majority of the research done on hair and women relates primarily to attitudes towards the removal body hair, and contain samples of mostly White women (Tiggemann & Hodgson, 2008; Tiggemann & Lewis, 2004; Tiggemann & Kenyon, 1998). Other studies that examine women and hair focus on preference for blonde hair, where samples only include White women (Rich & Cash, 1993).

While much has been said about hair in Black communities, scientific evidence is lacking. Some authors, such as Banks (2000) and White (2005), say that the choices

Black women make when it comes to their hair depend on too many variables for anyone to argue exactly what hair means to Black women. At the same time, they interview women who overwhelmingly claim to feel “free” and “liberated” from wearing their hair naturally, or feel that the expectation and preference is for their hair to be straight. Studies on the media portrayal of Black women show that straight hair and light skin is seen more often in magazines (as cited in Patton, 2006). Other studies show that products for straight styles make up a third of the ads in popular Black magazines (as cited in Patton, 2006). Less is known about what contributes to specific beliefs that people hold about Black hair.

The current study examines Black women’s experiences with their hair and how those experiences differ from those of White women. Past research indicates that other aesthetic features, such as skin color, influence social and economic opportunity (Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, & Ward, 1987), body image (Thomas, 2001), and social acceptance (Bond & Cash, 1992). Hair for Black people closely parallels other features that have been the basis for criticism, namely skin color and facial features (Hall, 1995). It is reasonable to hypothesize that hair is important in the Black communities.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The following hypotheses and research questions relate to racial differences in hair experience. Experience was measured in five categories: time devoted to maintenance, money spent on maintenance (two parts: money spent and attitudes about money spent), activities hindered by hair choices, overall happiness with hair, and perceived social attitudes.

Hypothesis 1: Racial Differences

Hypothesis 1a. Black women spend more time than White women maintaining their hair.

Hypothesis 1b. Black women spend more money than White women maintaining their hair.

Hypothesis 1c. Black women are more likely than White women to report money-related burdens regarding their hair.

Hypothesis 1d. Black women are more likely than White women to report hindrances on daily life as it relates to their hair.

Hypothesis 1e. Black women are less likely than White women to be happy with their hair.

Hypothesis 1f. Black women perceive their hair as less acceptable to others when compared to White women.

Hypothesis 2: Hair Differences

These hypotheses aim to discover differences in hair experience (defined above) among Black women that wear different hairstyles.

Hypothesis 2a. Black women that choose to wear their hair tightly coiled (e.g., afro), in dreadlocks, or in braids generally spend less time maintaining their hair than Black women that wear their hair flat ironed, relaxed, a wig or weaved.

Hypothesis 2b. Black women that choose to wear their hair tightly coiled (e.g., afro), in dreadlocks, a wig, or in braids generally experience less hair related hindrances in daily life than Black women that wear their hair flat ironed, relaxed, a wig, or weaved..

Research Question 1: Hair Differences

Research question 1a. Do Black women with different hairstyles spend significantly different amount of money on hair maintenance?

Research question 1b. Do Black women with different hairstyles report money-related burdens regarding their hair at different rates?

Research question 1c. Do Black women with different hairstyles report happiness with their hair at different rates?

Research question 1d. Do Black women with different hairstyles report perceived acceptance at different rates?

Justification

Jefferson and Stake (2009) found that Black women rated their hair as more important than their weight and skin color. In that study it is not clear whether or not questions about hair type dealt with natural hair state or altered hair state. The current study breaks down importance by hairstyle, as well as looks at specific areas of importance. Hair in the Black community has been argued to have political and social importance (Banks, 2000; White, 2005). In interviews conducted by Banks (2000) and White (2005), some Black women that have chosen to wear their hair naturally describe the choice as self-expression while others view their choice as liberation and a rejection of the status quo. The anecdotal and qualitative evidence suggests that Black women have many reasons for wearing their hair certain ways.

As previously discussed, hair for Black women goes beyond one's personal preference. Some reasons Black women choose their style are as a form of self-expression, as a way to identify with their race, or to feel as though they will have better socio-economic success (Banks, 2000). An article in APA monitor reported that some Black women do not exercise for fear of ruining their hair (Dingfelder, 2013). A magazine survey of 700 ethnic women found that over 60% of women using relaxers are "obsessed" with keeping their hair as straight as possible (Adrienne, 2012). For Black women, hair may have an effect on self-esteem, body image, racial identity, and even health due to recreational restrictions. Furthermore, if hair concerns are fundamentally

different for Black women compared to White women, one would expect that hair's effect on the lives of Black women to be more profound for Black women.

The purpose of this research is to explore hair in the Black community. The topic is generally examined qualitatively. Many opinions on Black hair exist, but lacking quantitative research it is difficult to draw any conclusions on if, why, or how hair is important. It has been established that hair, like skin color, has been subject to harsh criticism for Black people. Issues surrounding hair affect Black women in particular because of hair's importance in determining feminine beauty (Patton, 2006). Preferences for hair have traditionally focused on hair being long and straight, two ideals that many Black women cannot achieve naturally (Patton, 2006). Black women are forced to have a time consuming and intimate relationship with their hair, regardless of how they choose to wear it. Examining Black hair attitudes from a quantitative perspective would help establish support for the qualitative research that exists. Furthermore, establishing an effective way to measure Black hair attitudes would allow future research to be conducted on beauty in Black communities. Much of the research surrounding beauty focuses on weight, followed by skin tone. If Black women truly rank their hair as the most important factor of their appearance, as found by the 2012 hair attitudes survey (Adrienne, 2012), it should be more of a focus in examining issues surrounding beauty and body image among Black women.

Method

Participants

Participants were 146 women who self-identified as Black or African American and 1,116 women who self-identified as White (non-Hispanic). All participants took part in an online survey that was distributed through Facebook.com and Reddit.com. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 71, with the majority (roughly 90%) being between 18 and 34.

Instrumentation

Demographics. Participants were asked to identify their sex, age, race, socioeconomic status, hairstyle, hair length, and hair texture. See Appendix A for demographic questionnaire.

Hair Experiences. Hair experiences were addressed in five different areas: time devoted to maintenance, money spent on maintenance, activities hindered by hair choices, overall happiness with hair, and perceived social acceptance. Time devoted to maintenance had three different categories: time spent daily (rated in 10 minute intervals from 1 to 7, where 1 = “less than 10 minutes” and 7 = “more than 60 minutes”), time taken to achieve one’s most worn style from start to finish (rated from 1 to 9, where 1 = “less than 10 minutes” and 9 = “more than 2 hours”), and how often in a three month period the participant goes through her styling process (rated from 1 to 7, where 1 = “once every 6 months or less” and 7 = “more than once a week”). Money spent on hair

products also had three different categories: number of salon visits within a year (rated from 1 to 7, where 1 = “once every 6 months or less” and 7 = “more than once a week”), cost of an average salon visit, and money spent on hair products in the past 6 months (both rated from 1 to 13 in \$25 intervals, where 1 = “less than \$25” and 13 = “more than \$300”).

New scales were developed in order to examine attitudes towards money spent, lifestyle hindrances, happiness, and perceived social acceptance. All four Likert-type scales allowed for ratings from 1 to 6. Reliability for the 4-item money attitudes scale was $\alpha = .832$. Reliability for the 8-item hair related hindrances was $\alpha = .792$. Reliability for the 6-item happiness scale was $\alpha = .756$. Reliability for the 8-item perceived social acceptance scale was $\alpha = .770$. See Appendix B for all items.

Results

It should be noted that performing several analyses on the same sample is generally not recommended due to alpha inflation (i.e., increased risk of a Type I error). However, because this study is exploratory in nature, I aim to examine several different questions. The ability to collect different samples for each question of interest is limited. Therefore the results of the study are best used as guide future research that can utilize more refined statistical techniques.

Hypothesis 1a-1f

Due to the imbalance in sample sizes between White women ($n = 1,116$) and Black women ($n = 146$), all tests employ approaches that do not assume equal variances.

Hypothesis 1a – Time. As hypothesized, Black women ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 2.6$) reportedly took more time to achieve their most commonly worn hair style than White women ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 2.0$), $t(168) = 12.88$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.24$. Contrary to the original hypothesis, White women ($M = 6.59$, $SD = 1.0$) went through their styling process more frequently than Black women ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.3$), $t(168) = -9.99$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.95$. There was no difference between Black women ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 1.2$) and White women ($M = 1.63$, $SD = .91$) in time spent each day on their hair, $t(167) = 1.64$, $p = .103$, $d = 0.15$.

Hypothesis 1b – Money part 1. Two of the three cost related hypotheses were supported in the current study. Black women ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 2.6$) reported spending

more money on hair products in a 3 month span than did White women ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.9$), $t(164) = 3.46$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.34$. Black women ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 3.2$) also reported using salon services more frequently in the past year compared to White women ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 2.8$), $t(174) = 5.15$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.48$. There was no difference between how much Black women ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 2.0$) and White women ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 2.0$) spent on a salon visit, $t(98) = 1.89$, $p = .06$, $d = 0.21$.

Hypothesis 1c – Money part 2. Higher scores on the money-related burdens scale indicated more money-related burdens. Although it was hypothesized that Black women would experience more burden, there was no difference between Black women ($M = 12.86$, $SD = 6.1$) and White women ($M = 12.07$, $SD = 5.3$) on attitudes towards haircare costs, $t(172) = 1.49$, $p = .14$, $d = 0.14$.

Hypothesis 1d – Hindrance. Higher scores on the hair related hindrances scale indicated more perceived hindrance. Although it was hypothesized that Black women would experience more hindrances, there was no difference between Black women ($M = 19.45$, $SD = 8.6$) and White women ($M = 18.01$, $SD = 7.4$) in hair related hindrances, $t(169) = 2.15$, $p = .057$, $d = 0.18$.

Hypothesis 1e – Happiness. Higher scores on the hair happiness scale indicated higher overall happiness. Contrary to the original hypothesis, Black women ($M = 23.91$, $SD = 5.4$) were reportedly more happy with their hair than White women ($M = 21.91$, $SD = 5.9$), $t(190) = 4.15$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.36$.

Hypothesis 1f – Perceived social acceptance. Higher scores on the perceived social acceptance scale indicated more negative perceptions. As hypothesized, Black

women ($M = 28.72$, $SD = 7.5$) felt that others have a more negative perception of their hair than did White women ($M = 24.43$, $SD = 6.42$), $t(171) = 6.58$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.62$.

Hypothesis 2a-2b and Research Questions 1a-1d

For the following hypotheses and research questions, Black women were split into two groups determined by whether or not their most commonly worn hair style was non-straight/low maintenance (i.e., tightly coiled, in dreadlocks, or in braids/twists) or straight/high maintenance (i.e.,). Due to the imbalance in sample sizes, non-straight/low maintenance ($n = 103$) and straight/high maintenance styles ($n = 30$), all tests employ approaches that do not assume equal variances.

Hypothesis 2a – Time. The current study hypothesized that women with non-straight/low maintenance styles spent less time on their hair than those with straight/high maintenance styles across all three time variables. However, Black women with non-straight/low maintenance hair styles ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.3$) went through their styling process more times per month than those with straight/high maintenance hair styles ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.5$), $t(130) = 2.42$, $p = 0.02$, $d = 0.52$. There was no difference in time spent daily between those with non-straight/low maintenance styles ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 1.2$) and straight/high maintenance styles ($M = 1.9$, $SD = 1.32$), $t(131) = -0.33$, $p = 0.74$, $d = 0.06$, nor was there a difference between non-straight/low maintenance ($M = 6.17$, $SD = 2.6$) and straight/high maintenance ($M = 6.87$, $SD = 2.61$) in time spent to achieve styles from start to finish, $t(131) = -1.32$, $p = 0.19$, $d = 0.27$.

Hypothesis 2b – Hindrance. As expected, women with non-straight/low maintenance styles ($M = 18.32$, $SD = 8.1$) rated their hair related hindrances lower than those with straight/high maintenance styles ($M = 24.75$, $SD = 8.7$), $t(128) = -3.68$, $p < .001$, $d = -0.77$.

Research Question 1a – Money part 1. There was no difference between Black women with non-straight/low maintenance hair styles ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 2.4$) and straight/high maintenance hair styles ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 3.10$) in money spent on products every 3 months, $t(130) = -1.64$, $p = 0.104$, $d = -0.32$. There was no difference between Black women with non-straight/low maintenance hair styles ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 3.2$) and straight/high maintenance hair styles ($M = 4.9$, $SD = 3.0$) in number of salon visits in the past year, $t(130) = -0.8$, $p = 0.42$, $d = -0.17$. There was also no difference between Black women with non-straight/low maintenance hair styles ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 2.1$) and straight/high maintenance hair styles ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.81$) in total spent on salon visits, $t(73) = -0.37$, $p = 0.71$, $d = -0.11$.

Research Question 1b – Money part 2. Black women with non-straight/low maintenance styles ($M = 12.27$, $SD = 5.95$) rated their money-related burdens lower than those with straight/high maintenance styles ($M = 15.34$, $SD = 5.95$), $t(129) = -2.48$, $p = 0.02$, $d = -0.55$.

Research Question 1c – Happiness. Black women with non-straight/low maintenance styles ($M = 24.82$, $SD = 4.98$) indicated they were happier with their hair than those with straight/high maintenance styles ($M = 21.41$, $SD = 4.89$), $t(130) = 3.26$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.69$.

Research Question 1d – Perceived Social Acceptance. There was no difference in how Black women with non-straight/low maintenance styles ($M = 29.03$, $SD = 6.8$) and straight/high maintenance styles ($M = 28.6$, $SD = 7.0$) rated others' perceptions of their hair, $t(128) = 0.30$, $p = 0.76$, $d = 0.06$.

Discussion

Past research comes to mixed conclusions when it comes to Black women's attitudes about their own racially defined features. Although Black women often do not meet the European beauty standard, they tend to report feeling more positive about their bodies than their White counterparts. The current study found that attitudes about hair are in some cases similar to attitudes about other racially defined features, such as skin color and weight. The current study also highlights differences between Black women and White women as well as among Black women with different hairstyles with regard to time and money spent on hair.

Racial Differences

Differences between Black women and White women in regards to time were mixed. It was hypothesized that Black women spent more time than White women maintaining their hair. This was true in some cases, but not in others. Black women did spend more time achieving their most worn hair style, but White women went through their styling process more often than Black women. This finding can be explained considering that Black women's hair is more difficult to maintain given its naturally coarse texture and requires more manipulation in order to achieve a style unless it is kept very short. When hair is easier to manipulate, as is the case for the majority of White women, styling may be attempted more often due to the fact that it does not necessarily take a lot of time. Black women are also more likely to wear styles that take a lot of time

upfront but are more easily maintained once completed, such as braids. There was no difference between the two groups in regards to the amount of time spent each day on their hair.

Black women generally spent more money on hair products and used salon services more often than White women. Black women reportedly visiting the salon more often, but there was no difference between the groups in the amount spent on salon services. Furthermore, although Black women spent more money on products and visited the salon more often, there was no difference in perceived money-related burdens between the two groups. The current study also found no differences in perceived hindrance between the two groups. The current study expected to find a difference given evidence that Black women sometimes avoid exercise in order to prevent sweating out their hair (Dingfelder, 2013), something that is likely not experienced as frequently by White women.

Prior research suggests that, despite an inherent inability to meet traditional European beauty standards, Black women have more positive body attitudes than White women (Jefferson & Stake, 2009). The current study supports this finding in that Black women were reportedly happier with their hair than White women. This was despite the fact that Black women spent more time to achieve their most commonly worn style and spent more money on products used to maintain their hair. This aligns with prior findings regarding weight where Greenwood and Dal Cin (2012) found that Black women were more content with their weight than white women despite being heavier than white women on average.

The qualitative data and anecdotal accounts regarding a perceived rejection of non-straight/natural hair are also supported by findings in the current study. Black women felt that their hair was less socially acceptable than did White women. This parallels findings by Bond and Cash (1992), where Black women indicated belief that the beauty standard towards lighter skin was preferred by Black men. This finding also supports anecdotal evidence that suggests that Black women feel that others judge them negatively when their hair is in its natural state (Banks, 2000; Ross, 2011; White, 2005). Even though Black women in this study felt their hair was perceived more negatively by others, they were still happier with their hair than White women. Prior research tells us that Black women have less concern over receiving approval from others and lower body surveillance (Hall, 1995; Greenwood & Dal Cin, 2012), so it is reasonable that—while they believe others perceive their hair more negatively—they are not necessarily bothered by what others think.

Hair Style Differences

Originally it was hypothesized that Black women with non-straight/low maintenance hair styles generally spent less time on their hair than those with straight/high maintenance styles. Contrary to the original hypothesis, Black women with non-straight/low maintenance hairstyles spent went through their styling process more times per month than those with straight/high maintenance styles. This, however, is reasonable given that straight/high maintenance hairstyles require less washing due to the fact that washing the hair causes it to revert back to a non-straight state or interferes with

the additional hair pieces (as is the case with extensions and wigs), thus ruining the desired effect. There was no difference between the groups in regards to time spent to achieve styles from start to finish or in time spent daily.

Black women with non-straight/low maintenance styles reported fewer hair related hindrances than those who wore straight/high maintenance styles, confirming the original hypothesis. Maintaining a straight hairstyle means being careful to avoid certain environments and conditions, such as sweat inducing exercise (Dingfelder, 2013). Also recall the survey done by Adrienne (2012) in which the majority of ethnic women who wore relaxers reported being “obsessed” with maintaining their straight hair style. When a woman has to constantly keep in mind maintaining their straight hair, it is reasonable that those who wear their hair straight report more life hindrances.

There was no difference found between the two groups in regards to money spent on hair products, number of salon visits, or cost of salon visit. Despite there being no observable difference in actual cost of haircare, women with straight/high maintenance styles had higher perceived money related burden than did those with non-straight/low maintenance styles. This difference is also seen when examining overall happiness with one’s hair; Black women who wore more ethnic styles (e.g., non-straight) were happier with their hair than those who wore styles closer to the European ideal (e.g., straight). This finding relates to those by Bond and Cash (1992), where dark-skinned Black women were less likely to internalize a light-skinned ideal when compared to medium-skinned women. One could argue that the further away one is from the standard beauty ideal, the less of an impact it makes. Additionally, because prior research also found that Black

women report less body surveillance and concern over weight (Greenwood & Dal Cin), it is reasonable that the women in the current study were happier despite not fitting the ideal.

Limitations

The current study has some limitations to keep in mind. The sample of Black women ($n = 146$) was relatively small compared to that of White women ($n = 1,116$), making it difficult to find significant differences between the two groups in some cases. Within the sample of Black women, the majority wore their hair in the tightly coiled/kinky style ($n = 52$). Twenty-six wore their hair in braids or twists, while fewer than 11 indicated a style in the other 6 style categories they were able to choose from. There may have been a bias towards “natural” hair, where women who wore their hair in non-straight/low maintenance styles responded more frequently to the survey due to their positive feelings about embracing a style outside of the norm. Future studies should aim to gather a more even sample between different races as well as within a single race with regards to hairstyle.

Conclusions

The original concern driving the current study was that failure to meet society's standard of beauty may have a negative effect on Black women's attitudes about their hair and thus negatively impact body image. However, the opposite appears to be true. Black women were reportedly happier with their hair than White women. Furthermore, Black women who wore their hair in non-straight/low maintenance styles were happier than those who wore it in straight/high maintenance styles. Those with straight/high maintenance hair also had a greater perceived monetary and lifestyle burden than those with non-straight/low maintenance hair. Black women were happier even though they reportedly experience more burdens as it relates to both time and money spent on haircare when compared to White women. Overall, Black women that stray further from the European beauty standard seem to have a more positive relationship with their hair.

References

- Adrienne. (2012, 03 01). *Hair Attitudes: Relaxed or Natural – Are Our Experiences the Same?* Retrieved January 30, 2013, from memyhairandthecity.com:
<http://memyhairandthecity.com/2012/03/01/hair-attitudes-relaxed-or-natural-are-our-experiences-the-same/>
- Banks, I. (2000). *Hair matters: beauty, power, and African American women's consciousness*. New York: New York University Press.
- Bond, S., & Cash, T. (1992). African American beauty: Skin color and body image among African American college women. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 22, 874-888. doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.1992.tb00930.x.
- Cash, T. F., & Szymanski, M. L. (1995). The development and validation of the Body-Image Ideals Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 64, 466–477. doi:10.1207/s15327752jpa6403_6.
- Cook, R. E. (2012, 08 02). *African American Skin, Orange Shorts: A Hooters Girl Narrative* <http://www.ebony.com/news-views/African-American-skin-orange-shorts-a-hooters-girl-narrative#ixzz2NDkVsC00>. Retrieved February 06, 2013, from Ebony: <http://www.ebony.com/news-views/African-American-skin-orange-shorts-a-hooters-girl-narrative#axzz2NChkIktA>
- Collins, P. H. (2004). *African American sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*. New York: Routledge.

- Dingfelder, S. (2013, January). African-American women at risk. *APA Monitor*, 44 (1), 36-39. Retrieved February 06, 2013, from American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/01/african-american.aspx>
- Greenwood, D. N., & Dal Cin, S. (2012). Ethnicity and body consciousness: African American and White American women's negotiation of media ideals and others' approval. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 1, 220-235. doi: 10.1037/a0029411.
- Hall, C. C. I. (1995). Beauty is in the soul of the beholder: Psychological implications of beauty and african american women. *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health*, 1, 125-137. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.1.2.125>.
- Harris, S. M. (1995). Family, self, and sociocultural contributions to body-image attitudes of African-American women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 19, 129-145. doi:10.1111/j.1471- 6402.1995.tb00282.x.
- Jefferson, D., & Stake, J. (2009). Appearance self-attitudes of African American and European American women: media comparisons and internalization of beauty ideals. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 33, 396-409. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.2009.01517.x.
- Keith, V., & Herring, C. (1991). Skin tone and stratification in the African American community. *American Journal of Sociology*, 97, 760-778. doi: 10.1086/229819.
- Lee, M. (2013). Christian school threatens to expel student because of natural hair. *Christian Post U.S.* Retrieved from <http://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-school-threatens-to-expel-student-because-of-natural-hair-109611/>.

- Mazur, A. (1986). U.S. trends in feminine beauty and overadaptation. *Journal of Sex Research*, 22, 281-303. doi: 10.1080/00224498609551309.
- Makkar, J. K., & Strube, M. J. (1995). Black women's self-perceptions of attractiveness following exposure to white versus African American beauty standards: The moderating role of racial identity and self-esteem. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25, 1547-1566. doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.1995.tb02632.x.
- Okazawa-Rey, M., Robinson, T., & Ward, J. V. (1987). African American women and the politics of skin color and hair. *Women & Therapy*, 6, 89– 102.
doi:10.1300/J015V06N01_07.
- Oney, C., Cole, E., & Sellers, R. (2011). Racial identity and gender as moderators of the relationship between body image and self-esteem for African Americans. *Sex Roles*, 65, 619-631. doi: 10.1007/s11199-011-9962-z
- Patton, T. O. (2006). Hey girl, am I more than my hair?: African American women and their struggles with beauty, body image, and hair. *National Women's Studies Association Journal* , 18, 24-51. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2354.2006.00387.x.
- Rich, M. K., & Cash, T. F. (1993). The American image of beauty: Media representations of hair color for four decades. *Sex Roles*, 29, 113-124. doi: 10.1007/BF00289999.
- Ross, J. (2011). *Natural Or Relaxed, For African American Women, Hair Is Not A Settled Matter*. Retrieved February 25, 2013, from Huffington Post:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/04/African-American-hair-natural-relaxed-_n_918200.html?page=1

- Sellers, R. M., Rowley, S. A. J., Chavous, T. M., Shelton, J. N., & Smith, M. A. (1997). Multidimensional inventory of African American identity: A preliminary investigation of reliability and construct validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *73*, 805– 815. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.73.4.805.
- Tiggemann, M., & Hodgson, S. (2008). The hairlessness norm extended: Reasons for and predictors of women's body hair removal at different body sites. *Sex Roles*, *59*, 889-897. doi: 10.1007/s11199-008-9494-3.
- Tiggemann, M., & Kenyon, S. J. (1998). The hairlessness norm: the removal of body hair in women. *Sex Roles*, *39*, 873-885. doi: 10.1023/A:1018828722102.
- Tiggemann, M., & Lewis, C. (2004). Attitudes toward women's body hair: Relationship with disgust sensitivity. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *28*, 381-387. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2004.00155.x
- Thomas, V. G. (1989). Body-image satisfaction among African American women. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *129*, 107. doi: 10.1080/00224545.1989.9711705.
- White, S. B. (2005). Releasing the pursuit of boun' and behavin' hair: natural hair as an Afrocentric feminist aesthetic for beauty. *Media and Cultural Politics* , *1*, 295-308. doi: 10.1386/macp.1.3.295/1.

Appendices

Appendix A

Demographics

Age

Race

What is your yearly income?

What is your parents' yearly income?

Which one of these describes your natural hair texture the best?



Which best describes your natural hair length?

1. Closely cropped to head
2. Ear-length
3. Slightly above shoulder length
4. Exactly shoulder length
5. Slightly below shoulder length
6. To the middle of my upper arm
7. Longer than all of the above

In the past year, what has been your most worn hairstyle?

1. With flat iron or pressing comb
2. Relaxer (with or without flat iron or pressing comb)
3. Braids
4. Extensions (e.g. weaves)
5. Wig
6. Dreadlocks
7. Tightly coiled/Kinky (e.g. Afro)
8. Other (please specify) _____

Appendix B**Time**

1. On average, how much time do you spend doing your hair daily?
 - a. Less than 10 minutes
 - b. 10-20 minutes
 - c. 21-30 minutes
 - d. 31-40 minutes
 - e. 41-50 minutes
 - f. 51-60 minutes
 - g. More than 60 minutes

2. Starting with washing, how long does it take to style your hair in your usually worn style?
 - a. Less than 10 minutes
 - b. 10-20 minutes
 - c. 21-30 minutes
 - d. 31-40 minutes
 - e. 41-50 minutes
 - f. 51-60 minutes
 - g. 61-90 minutes
 - h. 91-120 minutes
 - i. More than 2 hours (please write in # of hours) _____

3. How many times per month do you go through this process?

- a. Once every 6 months or less
- b. Once every 3 to 5 months
- c. Once every 2 months
- d. Once a month
- e. Twice a month (once every 2 weeks)
- f. Once a week
- g. More than once a week

Money

1. How much money do you spend **every 6 months** on hair products? (e.g., shampoos, treatments, extensions)
 - a. Less than \$25
 - b. \$25-\$50
 - c. \$51-\$75
 - d. \$76-\$100
 - e. \$101-\$125
 - f. \$126-\$150
 - g. \$151-\$175
 - h. \$176-\$200
 - i. \$201-\$225
 - j. \$226-\$250
 - k. \$251-\$275
 - l. \$276-\$300

- m. More than \$300
2. List the types of hair products that you purchase frequently _____ (Open ended)
 3. In the last year, how many times did you get your hair done at a salon (or other place you get your hair done)?
 - a. Once every 6 months or less
 - b. Once every 3 to 5 months
 - c. Once every 2 months
 - d. Once a month
 - e. Twice a month (once every 2 weeks)
 - f. Once a week
 - g. More than once a week
 - h. I do not visit salons
 4. On average, how much money do you spend during a visit to the salon (or other place you get your hair done)?
 - a. Less than \$25
 - b. \$25-\$50
 - c. \$51-\$75
 - d. \$76-\$100
 - e. \$101-\$125
 - f. \$126-\$150
 - g. \$151-\$175
 - h. \$176-\$200

- i. \$201-\$225
- j. \$226-\$250
- k. \$251-\$275
- l. \$276-\$300
- m. More than \$300

Table 1. Monetary Burden Scale

Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (1)	<i>Disagree</i> (2)	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i> (3)	<i>Somewhat Agree</i> (4)	<i>Agree</i> (5)	<i>Strongly Agree</i> (6)
1. I spend too much money maintaining my hairstyle.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I have no choice but to spend a lot of money to maintain my hair.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. If I am on a tight budget, I will spend money on my hair even if I have other important things to pay for.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. If I do not spend money to maintain my hairstyle, I will not look good.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Table 2. Hindrance Scale

Please indicate how accurately these statements describe you.	<i>Not at all like me</i> (1)	<i>Not usually like me</i> (2)	<i>Somewhat unlike</i> (3)	<i>Somewhat like me</i> (4)	<i>Usually like me</i> (5)	<i>Just like me</i> (6)
1. I avoid swimming because it might ruin my hair.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I avoid going out in the rain because it might ruin my hair.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I avoid strenuous activity in order to protect my hairstyle.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I cannot do activities I'd like to do because of my hair.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I cannot style my own hair to my liking.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I usually have to get my hair styled professionally.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The time it takes me to style my hair interferes with things I'd rather be doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I take extra caution in the shower to prevent my hair from getting wet.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Table 3. Happiness Scale

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.	<i>Strongly Disagree (1)</i>	<i>Disagree (2)</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree (3)</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree (4)</i>	<i>Agree (5)</i>	<i>Strongly Agree (6)</i>
1. I feel good about how my hair looks.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I think my hair is beautiful.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I feel good about how my natural hair (hair without any chemical treatment) looks.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I would change my hair curliness if I could. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I wish my hair was longer (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I think other women have better looking hair than I do. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Table 4. Perceived Social Acceptance Scale

Please indicate how you feel about the following statements.	<i>Not at all true (1)</i>	<i>Rarely true (2)</i>	<i>Sometimes untrue (3)</i>	<i>Sometimes true (4)</i>	<i>Often true (5)</i>	<i>Almost always true (6)</i>
1. The way I prefer to style my hair interferes with my ability be employed.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. The way I prefer to style my hair is not attractive to most people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Others judge me based on how I prefer to style my hair.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I would prefer to style my hair differently than I usually do, but am afraid of how others may react.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Men generally prefer straight hair on women.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Women generally prefer to have straight hair.	1	2	3	4	5	6