



# Why Question Project

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**Why do Black women aspire to have more Eurocentric features, and what role does the media play in this?  
How can this impact their lives?**



# Behind The Question



**“Melody, a young African American student at Hernandez, was embarrassed about her hair and told me that she wished her hair looked like mine. I think that this issue of insecurity and beauty standards can really affect young African American children like Melody, and I find it really sad that these standards are so ingrained in society that people still aspire to have Eurocentric features and wish they looked less like their race.”**

# Connecting to Service-Learning

**Ellis:** I have heard students talking about how they **think they aren't pretty**, so it is important for me to learn more about the beauty standards other races/cultures are facing.

**Balfour:** I've overheard students **make fun of other kids for being "too dark"**. The colorism that exists within the Black community is heavily influenced by the media and pop culture.

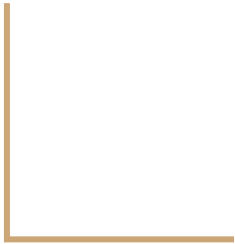
# Insider Group

- ★ The inside group of our question is **Black women**.

Our question centers on Black women and girls' perspective of how Eurocentric beauty standards affect their self image. Since we are specifically looking at this one group and their ideas, they are the inside group. They likely hold the most valuable and relevant knowledge on the topic, because it is their lived experience.



# Behind the Sources



# Sources Grid

	<i>Insider</i>	<i>Outsider</i>
<i>Young Person</i>	<b>Modern Doll Study</b>	<b>CNN Video</b>
<i>Adult</i>	<b>Marita Golden</b>	<b>Julian Vigo</b>
<i>Adult Who has Studied Topic</i>	<b>College Study</b>	<b>Lindsay Kite</b>



# Insider Sources

## Modern Doll Study

young person

This source **highlights the perceptions of 50 young people**, (47 of whom were African American). Researchers provide an update to a well established psychological study using dolls to determine children's ideas and preferences about race.

## Marita Golden

adult

Marita Golden focuses on her **experience as an African American woman** and emphasizes the importance of hair as an “expression of their souls”. It mentions several specific cases in recent history that led to the ‘norms’ of Black hair today.

## College Study

adult who has studied

This study focuses on **31 female African American college students** and their experiences related to body image and beauty. Through focusing on hair, skin color/colorism, and body type, the study uncovers the sources of messages on beauty and their effects on African American women.

# Outsider Sources

## CNN Video

young person

This video article highlights the experience that young boys and girls have had with **the influence of whitewashed media and societal standards on their own self image**. They discuss skin color preference and the links between beauty and race.

## Julian Vigo

adult

This source, written by a white woman, ponders the **relationship between media and beauty standards**. Emphasis on the discrimination of Black women due to their hair is made.

## Lindsay Kite

adult who has studied

Lindsay Kite, a white co-owner of a beauty company, highlights how **women of color in media are whitewashed**, creating both a false sense of increased representation and unattainable standards.



**Key Findings**

# Analysis

- 1. Media Influence**
- 2. Family Influence**
- 3. Shift in Views Over Time**

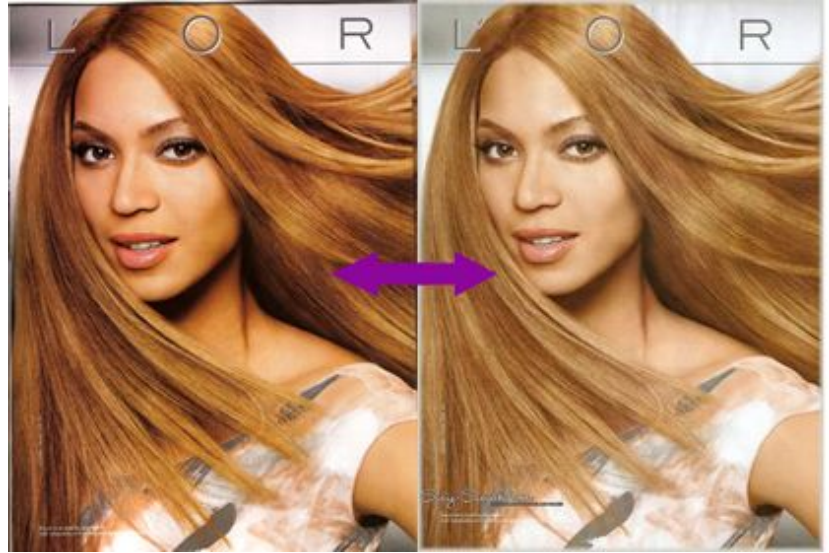
# Media Influence

There is a “striking **relationship between** how **media** addresses the bodies and lives of females **and how** these very **subjects** reactively **perceive themselves.**” - Julian Vigo, outsider adult

“In all of the commercials I can think of seeing, the Black woman is never of a dark complexion, she never has her natural hair, natural as in permed, it’s usually that the woman is kind of on the lighter side and has naturally curly hair. That’s all you see all the time and it drives me nuts.’ Thus, while there is an **increase in Black women in the media**, the women in our focus groups **do not** feel that they **represent most Black women.**” - Germinie Awad, insider adult who has studied topic

# Media Influence

“**Companies** like L'oreal and Clairol have come under fire for digitally **lightening both the skin color and hair color of black women** featured in their advertising, including Beyonce and Queen Latifah...” - Lindsay Kite, outsider adult who has studied topic





Benton, T. (2017). Tierra Benton Joins Pantene Gold Series Celebrating Strong, Beautiful African American Hair. Pantene. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aXNHxAVQ4w>

# Family Influence

- ★ Whether the articles were about young black girls, or grown women, there was usually mention of how parents influenced people's self image.
- ★ Parents also likely control the kind of media they allow their children to consume.

“ Maher (2012) noted that **parents play a major role in their child's understanding of race and racism**. Positive attitudes and respect towards members of one's own race as well as others should be taught by parents.”

- D. Bird, on insider children



# Family Influence

“My first natural was a delicate, short, close-cropped affair, and the hair that I had hated and been on a quest to change suddenly seemed so lovely, so perfect. **My family was aghast.** I withstood teasing, and threats from my father to cut me off financially, all because of my hair.” - Marita Golden, insider adult

“The women in our focus groups reported that their **families' concern for appearance was directly related to how important appearance is** in terms of achievement.” - Germiné Awad, insider adult who has studied

# Shift in Views

- ★ Psychologists now recognize that the black self hatred thesis is untrue
  - Instead, Black people may experience **internalized oppression through the media's** representation and preference of Eurocentric features
- ★ Represented by the results found in a Modern Doll Study, Black children no longer think the White doll is the most beautiful, a majority **preferred** the doll who appeared to be **mixed race**, Black and White
  - The white doll still wins for best hair
- ★ The Black Power movement in the 80s also contributed to shifting the narrative

# Shift in Views

## ★ Age differences

- **Young children**
  - Racial identity develops around age 8 (Bird et al.) and is a culmination of the messages children receive before then.
  - Children see things in a more straightforward, surface level way.
- **College students**
  - Begin to think more deeply about race and how it impacts themselves
  - Report that they are able to see microaggressions directed at them for their hair
    - Still feel pride about their hair, especially because of its versatility
- **Older women**
  - Gain more autonomy and can style their hair any way they choose

# Commonalities

- ★ “Black people’s - and especially Black women’s - hair is knotted and gnarled by issues of race, politics, history, and pride.” - Marita Golden, insider adult
- ★ Negative perspectives about natural Black hair and body image adversely influences Black women



# Wrapping Up



# Implications

Black women are **negatively affected**

- **Work force**
  - Hair discrimination
  - Black women feel the need to 'fit in' to the White standard to succeed
- **Self image**
  - Lowers the feeling of self-worth
  - Want to have more Eurocentric features rather than celebrating their natural look

# Future Directions

- Service-Learning and educational situations
  - Be aware of **language and wording** used around children
  - Include **lessons on body positivity** and self-love
- Daily life
  - **Promote positivity** around everyone's appearance including yourself
  - Be **conscious of the media** that you and others are exposed to
  - **Oppose** the possible '**othering**' that is happening to Black women

# New Questions

- With the shift in prominence of social media in present day, will the next generation of young Black women be more or less affected by harmful beauty standards?
- What is the most effective way to support positive body image of young Black women?



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**Questions?**

