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Perception Institute Creates First Hair Implicit Association Test to Measure Bias Against Textured Hair
Millennials and women from the natural hair community show that hair bias can be overridden.

NEW YORK, NY (January 31, 2017) – Perception Institute today released "*The 'Good Hair' Study: Explicit and Implicit Attitudes Toward Black Women's Hair,"* a groundbreaking study examining attitudes toward black women's hair. Using the first Hair Implicit Association Test (IAT), which Perception Institute created, and an extensive online survey, the study establishes a baseline measure of implicit and explicit biases against natural and textured hair. The findings of where people currently stand, however, also support the ongoing research that bias can be reduced through intergroup contact, counter-stereotyping, and the positive affirmation and celebration of marginalized groups.

Inspired by SheaMoisture's provocative "Break the Walls" campaign, which highlighted the divisive constructs of beauty by challenging traditional aisle "segregation" of hair products by race and redefined long-held industry ideals of what is considered "normal" in beauty, "The 'Good Hair' Study" explores how the hair and beauty standards that prevail in beauty, advertising, fashion, Hollywood, and on social media affect perceptions of women of color whose hairstyles fall outside of the dominant norm.

Statement from Alexis McGill Johnson, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Perception Institute:
"The beauty industry has long offered us ways to find our best selves. But how is it challenging us to see the best in each other – without bias? Many black women will feel affirmed by the Good Hair Study – it is what they have always known and experienced: wearing natural hairstyles has deep political and social implications. Our hope is that those who create the images we see in our daily lives will consider how bias against natural hair can undermine the ability for black women to be their full selves and affect their professional trajectory, social life and self-esteem. Moreover, we hope to encourage researchers to use intersectional approach to design new metrics, such as the Hair IAT, to drive new and nuanced conversations."

"The 'Good Hair' Study" involved 4,163 participants, including 3,475 men and women in a national sample recruited via an online panel and 688 self-identified "naturalista" women who are part of an online natural hair community. The Hair IAT will be made available to the public at perception.org to encourage further data collection for the purposes of developing insights into practices that create affirming and inclusive communities.

The study suggests that a majority of people, regardless of race and gender, hold some bias towards women of color based on their hair. It also offers promising evidence that the effects of bias can be overridden. Millennials showed far more positive attitudes toward textured hair than their older counterparts, while a majority of black "naturalistas" showed either no bias or a slight preference for textured hair.

Some key insights from the report include:
- **Black women in the natural hair community have more positive implicit and explicit attitudes toward textured hair than all other women,** but they nonetheless perceive the social stigma of wearing natural hair.
- **Black women experience more anxiety related to their hair and greater social and financial burden of hair maintenance than white women.** Black women are twice as likely to report social pressure to straighten their hair at work compared to white women.
- **Millennial "naturalistas" have more positive attitudes toward textured hair than all other women.** This is consistent with past studies showing that millennials identify as progressive, confident, self-expressive, and open to change.
- **White women demonstrate the strongest bias -- both explicit and implicit -- against textured hair,** rating it as less beautiful, less sexy/attractive, and less professional than smooth

hair. However, **white women who engage regularly with naturalista communities have lower levels of bias.**

Statement from Rachel Godsil, Co-Founder and Director of Research of Perception Institute:
"What is most exciting from this study is the finding that black and white women who are part of this particular natural hair online community showed more positive attitudes – both explicit and implicit. In this community, images of women with textured hair are celebrated and affirmed. As part of Perception Institute's work toward finding solutions to address bias that so deeply affects black women and girls in all aspects of their life, we will continue to explore the effects of regular exposure to positive visual representations on people's attitudes."

To read the full study – and to take the Hair Implicit Association Test – please visit goodhairstudy.com and learn more about the best practices to reduce implicit bias and create inclusive communities.

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About Perception Institute:
The Perception Institute is a consortium of researchers, advocates, and strategists that uses cutting-edge mind science research to reduce discrimination and other harms linked to race, gender, and other identity differences. Working in areas where bias has the most profound impact—education, health care, law enforcement and civil justice, and the workplace—Perception Institute designs interventions, evaluations, communications strategies, and trainings. Turning research into remedies, Perception Institute crafts real-world solutions for everyday relationships. To follow Perception Institute's work, please visit perception.org.