



Quantitative Research Study

Strands of Acceptance: The Impact of Societal Norms and Hair Biases on Black LGBTQ Women

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Abstract

This study explores the societal expectations and biases surrounding hair, particularly focusing on Black women and LGBTQ women during formal events such as weddings. Traditional beauty standards, often dictated by Eurocentric ideals, pressure Black women to alter their natural hair to conform to these norms, leading to significant psychological and social impacts. Similarly, LGBTQ women face challenges in navigating heteronormative beauty expectations. The intersection of these biases is especially pronounced for Black LGBTQ women, who must contend with compounded pressures related to both race and sexual orientation. Utilizing vignettes, this research examines whether hairstyle suggestions for Black women vary depending on whether they are marrying a man or a woman. Findings indicate a significant influence of societal norms and implicit biases on hairstyle choices, revealing the pervasive nature of colorism and hair texturism. The study advocates

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for more inclusive beauty standards and policies to promote acceptance and authenticity.

Keywords

Hair bias, Black women, LGBTQ women, Eurocentric beauty standards, colorism, hair texturism, intersectionality, societal norms

Introduction

Imagine preparing for one of the most significant days of your life—your wedding day—only to face societal pressures urging you to reconsider wearing your natural hair, a fundamental aspect of your identity. This is a harsh reality for many Black women, who are often pushed to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards that marginalize their authentic selves. These standards infiltrate even the most intimate and celebratory moments, such as weddings, where long, styled hair is often seen as the epitome of traditional femininity (Mensah, 2020; Moore, 2010). The pressure to adhere to these narrow definitions of beauty is not only widespread but also particularly challenging for individuals within the LGBTQ community, who frequently navigate conflicting expectations of conformity and authenticity (Bair & Kaufman, 2023; CROWN, 2023; Gill, 2023; Lukate & Foster, 2023).

Societal expectations have long imposed restrictive beauty standards on Black women, particularly in formal settings like weddings, where Eurocentric ideals pressure them to alter their natural hair to conform (Craig, 2002). This pressure not only affects their psychological and social well-being but also becomes more complex for Black LGBTQ women, who must navigate both racialized beauty norms and the additional biases related to their sexual orientation. While existing research addresses the social pressures Black women face in conforming to Eurocentric beauty standards, the intersection of these pressures within marriage contexts, especially for Black LGBTQ women, remains underexplored.

This study seeks to fill that gap by examining how societal norms and biases influence hairstyle choices for Black women, particularly in the context of their partner's gender. Using vignettes, this research aims to uncover the implicit biases

that shape perceptions of appropriate hairstyles for Black women on significant occasions like weddings. The findings will contribute to a broader understanding of how intersecting identities—race, gender, and sexual orientation—shape individual experiences and social expectations, and advocate for more inclusive beauty standards that honor the diverse identities of Black LGBTQ women.

LGBTQ women, especially Black LGBTQ women, face the dual challenge of conforming to heteronormative beauty standards while honoring their identities. The traditional bridal image, often reinforced by media portrayals, rarely includes LGBTQ couples or women with non-traditional hairstyles, pushing them towards a heteronormative ideal that may conflict with their personal identity (Clarke & Turner, 2007; Bair & Kaufman, 2020). The intersectionality of racial and sexual orientation biases, presents unique challenges, particularly for Black LGBTQ women, who are pressured to conform to both Eurocentric and heteronormative beauty ideals. This compounded discrimination can intensify feelings of inauthenticity and pressure to alter natural appearances for social acceptance.

By examining these dynamics, the current study aims to understand whether societal norms and biases influence hairstyle choices differently for Black women, depending on whether they are marrying a man or a woman. This understanding is crucial for promoting inclusivity and challenging traditional beauty standards that marginalize diverse identities, especially in contexts as significant as weddings (Byrd & Tharps, 2001; Patton, 2006; Opie & Phillips, 2015). Addressing these intersecting biases is vital for fostering a more inclusive and authentic representation of beauty across society.

Literature Review

Hair has long been recognized as a significant factor in psychological studies of attraction and beauty, traditionally emphasizing physical appearance, similarity, and social status as key determinants (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). However, much of this research has historically reinforced Eurocentric standards, predominantly valuing traits such as long, straight blonde hair, light skin, and blue eyes (Etoff, 1999). These narrow standards contrast sharply with the rich diversity of human beauty and frequently sideline the experiences of marginalized communities, particularly Black LGBTQ women. This exclusion from beauty ideals in academic discourse mirrors

similar patterns of marginalization in popular culture, media, and other social realms, where features and hairstyles typically associated with Black identity are often omitted from conversations on attraction. This oversight extends to the recognition of romantic relationships outside heteronormative frameworks.

Media representation plays a pivotal role in perpetuating these beauty biases. Bridal magazines and wedding blogs often highlight Eurocentric hairstyles, rarely featuring natural Black hair in its diverse forms. This lack of representation reinforces the idea that natural Black hair is less suitable for formal occasions like weddings (Patton, 2006). Even when natural hairstyles are featured, they are frequently stylized to mimic Eurocentric aesthetics rather than embracing the full range of natural Black hair textures, such as afros, braids, twists, and locs. Additionally, cultural perceptions within the Black community can influence these standards. Although there is a growing movement toward embracing natural hair, pockets of thought still associate straightened or chemically altered hair with greater sophistication and professionalism (Lukate & Foster, 2023). This internalized bias often leads to a preference for more traditionally accepted hairstyles during significant life events (Rosette & Dumas, 2007).

The academic discourse on beauty standards for Black women has been significantly enriched by scholars challenging and reframing traditional Eurocentric ideals. Pioneers like Collins (2000) and hooks (1992) critically examine how intersecting systems of race, gender, and class shape societal perceptions of beauty, often to the detriment of Black women. Collins articulates how these intersecting oppressions marginalize Black women's beauty, while hooks emphasizes the importance of reclaiming Black beauty in the face of white supremacy. Craig (2002) further explores the social and cultural dynamics that Black women navigate in resisting Eurocentric beauty norms.

Recent scholarship has expanded the understanding of hair and identity among Black women. Mbilishaka (2018) introduced the concept of "PsychoHairapy," exploring the intersections of hair care and mental health for Black women. Mbilishaka highlights how hair serves as a gateway to understanding the psychological well-being of Black women and underscores its deep cultural and emotional significance. Similarly, Hamilton examines legal frameworks like the CROWN Act, which combats hair discrimination, particularly in professional

settings where Black women are pressured to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards. Childs (2022) highlights how Black women utilize social media platforms to resist and redefine oppressive beauty norms.

Other scholars have addressed the psychological impacts of beauty standards and the trauma associated with hair discrimination. Wanzer (2022) offers narratives that highlight the societal pressures to conform and the resulting trauma. Cottom addresses how mainstream narratives have historically marginalized Black women's beauty and body image, and how these narratives are being actively contested. Similarly, Hughes (2021) explores body image anxieties among Black American women, illustrating the intersection of race, gender, and societal beauty standards.

Critical race theory (CRT) provides a lens to examine how race and racism are embedded within social structures and cultural norms (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In the context of hair, CRT highlights how societal beauty standards marginalize individuals with natural hair textures commonly associated with Black and other non-White communities. This marginalization manifests in various forms, including discrimination in professional settings, romantic relationships, and educational institutions. Social identity theory complements this by positing that individuals categorize themselves and others into in-groups and out-groups, often leading to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination, which influences perceptions of beauty and attractiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Hair, as a marker of identity, plays a significant role in how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others.

Historically, early psychological studies on attraction largely reflected societal norms and biases, emphasizing characteristics associated with Western beauty standards, particularly those embodied by white women. These studies often prioritized Eurocentric standards of beauty, neglecting the diverse preferences within marginalized communities (Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Etcoff, 1999). Media and popular culture played a significant role in reinforcing these standards. For example, Marilyn Monroe, with her blonde hair and blue eyes, epitomized the traditional Western beauty standard and was celebrated as the ultimate symbol of glamour and femininity in American popular culture. In contrast, Dorothy Dandridge, who broke significant racial barriers in Hollywood, seldom received comparable acknowledgment as a beauty icon, highlighting the racial biases in cultural

recognition of beauty. This historical bias has reinforced a narrow, Eurocentric definition of beauty, marginalizing people of color, especially Black individuals (Craig, 2002). These biases persist across generations and continue to influence conversations about beauty today.

In recent years, Black researchers have been at the forefront of reframing the narrative around attraction and beauty standards for Black women, working to dismantle the pervasive Eurocentric ideals that have long dominated mainstream psychology. These scholars emphasize the psychological and cultural richness that Black aesthetics bring to the understanding of beauty and attraction. By focusing on varied expressions of beauty within Black communities, they challenge the traditional bias toward Eurocentric standards. This shift supports a healthier self-image among Black individuals and enriches psychological discourse with more nuanced understandings of identity, resilience, and attractiveness. Their efforts are crucial in promoting a holistic view where beauty and attraction are decoupled from colonialist and racial biases, encouraging a celebration of diversity within academic and social contexts.

Despite these advances, the intersection of race and sexual orientation remains underrepresented in attraction literature. Black LGBTQ women face compounded marginalization, often excluded from research focused on either race or sexual orientation (Hargons et al., 2021; Makoni, 2021). The limited research available suggests that Black LGBTQ women navigate complex layers of bias related to both their race and sexual orientation. They may experience unique forms of discrimination not fully captured in studies focused solely on Black women or LGBTQ women (Bowleg, 2013). The underrepresentation of Black women, LGBTQ women, and specifically Black LGBTQ women in attraction studies has significant implications for psychological research. This exclusion perpetuates narrow beauty standards and fails to address the diverse experiences and identities within the population. Consequently, psychological theories of attraction often do not account for how intersecting identities influence perceptions of beauty and attractiveness.

For many Black LGBTQ women, hair is a significant marker of identity where racial, gender, and sexual identities intersect, sometimes presenting complex dynamics that vary from person to person. They navigate societal expectations that

devalue their natural hair and features while striving to express their cultural and sexual identities authentically. This intersectional experience differs significantly from that of white LGBTQs and Black straight women, each facing unique sets of pressures and biases. Understanding these complexities is essential for promoting a more inclusive and comprehensive view of beauty and identity within psychological research and broader societal discourse.

To address these gaps, there is a critical need for more inclusive research that accurately represents the diversity of experiences related to attraction. Future studies should aim to include a broader range of participants, considering factors such as race, sexual orientation, and gender identity. This approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of attraction and challenge the pervasive biases that have historically shaped this field. By incorporating intersectionality into attraction research, psychologists can better understand how overlapping identities influence romantic and social dynamics.

Methods

This study involved 118 participants recruited through the Prolific academic research platform. Participants included 90 women; 24 men; 2 non-binary individuals; 1 gender-questioning individual; and 2 participants who declined to specify their gender. The sample was racially and ethnically diverse, comprising 21 Black/African American participants; 81 White/European American participants; 7 Asian American participants; 2 Indigenous/Native American participants; and 1 Native Hawaiian participant. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 69 years, with an average age of 34.5 years. In terms of sexual orientation, 13 participants identified as bisexual; 1 as demisexual; 3 as gay; 4 as lesbian; 1 as pansexual; and the remaining participants identified as straight. The inclusion criteria required participants to be at least 18 years old and willing to provide informed consent digitally.

Procedure

Participants provided informed consent electronically before beginning the survey. The consent form outlined the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and the voluntary nature of participation. Confidentiality was ensured by not collecting any identifying information, and all data were stored securely. Participants

were presented with digital vignettes through an online survey platform, Qualtrics. The vignettes depicted women in different scenarios, such as job interviews, first dates, and social gatherings, with various hairstyle options for each event. Participants were asked to advise on suitable hairstyles for these events and to answer questions regarding their perceptions of attractiveness, professionalism, and other attributes based on the hairstyles shown. Example scenarios included advising on hairstyles for a job interview, a political campaign, a first date, a wedding, and a weekend getaway.

Participants were presented with a series of digital vignettes via the Qualtrics online survey platform. The vignettes depicted Black women in various social settings, such as job interviews, first dates, and weddings, and participants were asked to select the most appropriate hairstyle for each scenario. For the wedding scenario, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: either the vignette depicted a Black woman marrying a man, or it depicted a Black woman marrying a woman.

Each vignette was accompanied by images of different hairstyles—such as straight hair, braids, afros, and twists—that the participants could choose from. After selecting a hairstyle, participants were asked to explain their choice, considering both the elegance of the wedding dress and the bride's style. This approach was designed to elicit participants' implicit biases and societal norms regarding Black women's hair in the context of marriage.

After completing the vignette tasks, participants provided demographic information, including their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and relationship status. They were also asked additional questions about their personal experiences with hair, including satisfaction, maintenance practices, and the influence of cultural or personal factors on hairstyle choices.

Materials

The vignettes used in this study were specifically designed to reflect realistic and culturally relevant scenarios for Black women. Two main vignettes were presented for the wedding context:

- Vignette 1: "Imagine you are helping a close friend decide on the perfect hairstyle for her wedding day. She will be wearing a beautiful, elegant wedding dress to marry her longtime boyfriend Malik and wants a hairstyle that complements both her personal style and the sophistication of the dress."
- Vignette 2: "Imagine you are helping a close friend decide on the perfect hairstyle for her wedding day. She will be wearing a beautiful, elegant wedding dress to marry her longtime girlfriend Malika and wants a hairstyle that complements both her personal style and the sophistication of the dress."

Participants then completed the Bankhead-Johnson Hair Esteem Scale, a 10-item measure modeled after the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), which assesses individuals' attitudes and self-esteem related to their hair. The scale includes items such as "On the whole, I am satisfied with my hair" and "I feel I do not have much to be proud of about my hair," with responses rated on a 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) scale (Bankhead & Johnson, 2014).

Results: Data Analysis

Responses were coded and analyzed for patterns and significant differences between the groups within the wedding scenario. Statistical analyses included chi-square tests to determine if the distribution of hairstyle choices differed significantly between the two conditions. There were significant differences in the marriage scenario. There were no significant differences for the dating scenario, however, the data suggests a trend toward significance.

A cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the vignette scenarios (girlfriend vs. boyfriend) and the choice of hairstyles (braids vs. afro vs. straight or wavy hairstyles). The cross-tabulation results indicated that when the vignette involved a wife, suggesting a lesbian relationship, participants were significantly more likely to choose hairstyles with higher levels of ethnic salience such as braids compared to straight or wavy hairstyles. Conversely, when the vignette involved a husband, indicating a straight relationship, participants were more likely to choose straight or wavy hairstyles than natural hairstyles.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between the vignette scenario and hairstyle choice. The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 118) = 354, p < .001$. This indicates that the choice of hairstyle was significantly influenced by whether the vignette depicted a wife in a lesbian relationship or a husband in a straight relationship. See Tables 1 and 2 for more information.

Overview of Sample Composition

The sample for this study was overwhelmingly composed of white and heterosexual participants, with 81 of the 118 participants identifying as White/European American and 90 identifying as heterosexual women. This demographic skew significantly limited the opportunity to conduct a more nuanced analysis based on race and gender diversity. Although the sample included 21 Black/African American participants and a small number of other racial and ethnic minorities, the representation was insufficient to draw meaningful conclusions about how different racial groups might approach hairstyle preferences. Similarly, the limited representation of LGBTQ participants, with only 13 identifying as bisexual and a few others identifying as lesbian, demisexual, or pansexual, further constrained the analysis of intersectional factors.

Hairstyle Preferences and Gender of Partner

Despite these demographic limitations, the study revealed clear trends in hairstyle preferences based on the gender of the partner in the wedding scenario. When participants were asked to suggest a hairstyle for a Black woman marrying a man, there was a pronounced preference for straighter hairstyles, such as straight or wavy hair, with 62% of participants selecting these styles. This finding is indicative of the traditional and heteronormative beauty standards that continue to equate smooth, straight hair with femininity and elegance. This preference aligns with previous research on the dominance of Eurocentric beauty ideals, particularly within white and heterosexual populations (Opie & Phillips, 2015; Patton, 2006).

In contrast, when the vignette depicted a Black woman marrying another woman, participants were more likely to suggest hairstyles with higher ethnic salience, such as braids. Approximately 63% of participants chose these styles, suggesting a

potential openness to more diverse expressions of beauty within the context of same-gender marriages. However, it is crucial to interpret this finding with caution, given the predominance of white and heterosexual participants in the sample. The limited racial and sexual diversity within the participant pool means that these findings may not fully capture the attitudes and preferences of more diverse populations.

Visual Representation of Data

Despite the limitations, the data is presented in several tables to illustrate the trends observed, keeping in mind the demographic context of the sample. These tables highlight the general preferences for hairstyles in different marriage scenarios but should be interpreted with caution due to the limitations.

Table 1: Cross-tabulation of Vignette Scenario and Hairstyle Choice

Partner's Gender	Braids (%)	Straight (%)	Afro (%)	Other (%)	Total (%)
Woman	63	32	3	2	100
Man	41	62	3	3	100

Table 2: Hairstyle Choices by Race (Note: Limited Data)

Race/Ethnicity	Braids (%)	Straight (%)	Afro (%)	Other (%)
Black/African American	72	21	5	2
White/European American	33	58	5	4
Other/Mixed	45	45	7	3

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the deeply entrenched societal biases and norms that shape hairstyle suggestions for Black women, particularly concerning the gender of their partner. This research highlights the pervasive influence of colorism, hair texturism, and heteronormative beauty standards on perceptions of beauty and appropriateness, especially during significant life events like weddings. Consistent

with previous research, the data revealed that when participants were asked to suggest hairstyles for a Black woman marrying a man, they predominantly chose straighter hairstyles, such as straight or wavy hair. This preference is reflective of traditional and heteronormative beauty standards that equate smooth, straight hair with femininity and elegance (Opie & Phillips, 2015; Patton, 2006). These findings align with broader societal biases towards Eurocentric beauty ideals, which often marginalize natural Black hair textures by deeming them less suitable for formal and special occasions (Rosette & Dumas, 2007).

Conversely, when the vignette depicted a Black woman marrying another woman, participants were more likely to suggest hairstyles with higher ethnic salience, such as braids. This trend may indicate a more liberal and accepting view of lesbian relationships, coupled with a willingness to embrace diverse expressions of beauty within the context of same-gender marriages. The significant difference in hairstyle suggestions between the two scenarios underscores the critical role of intersectionality in understanding how societal norms impact Black women differently based on the gender of their partner (Crenshaw, 1989). This finding suggests that while traditional beauty standards continue to exert influence, there may be greater flexibility in the expectations placed on Black women in same-gender relationships, allowing for a broader range of acceptable beauty expressions.

The results also reveal a persistent underrepresentation of natural Black hairstyles, such as afros, even in contexts where more diverse beauty standards might be expected. This observation further exacerbates the narrative that Black hair in its natural state is not considered appropriate for special occasions, perpetuating the marginalization of Black women's natural beauty. This is consistent with prior findings that highlight the internalized notion that natural Black hair is less formal or elegant, reinforcing Eurocentric beauty standards even within non-traditional relationship contexts (Byrd & Tharps, 2001).

Moreover, the implications of these findings extend beyond aesthetic preferences. The pressure to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards can have far-reaching effects on Black women's self-perception and identity formation. For instance, the desire to wear straight hair, driven by societal pressures, may lead to harmful hair practices that negatively impact hair health and reinforce negative self-perceptions (Tate, 2007). This is particularly concerning given the lack of

representation of natural Black hair in bridal media and advertisements, which further reinforces the notion that such hair is less suitable for formal occasions. Increasing the visibility of natural Black hair in all its forms in both bridal media and mainstream advertisements is therefore crucial for redefining beauty standards and promoting inclusivity.

For LGBTQ women, the findings suggest a dual challenge: conforming to heteronormative beauty standards while navigating personal identity. Participants appeared more accepting of diverse hairstyles, including braided Black hair, when the Black woman was depicted as marrying another woman. This suggests that same-gender relationships may be perceived as more accepting environments for non-Eurocentric beauty expressions. However, Black LGBTQ women may still face significant societal pressures to conform to traditional beauty norms during formal events, to gain social acceptance and avoid stigmatization (Clarke & Turner, 2007). When these women conform to norms that contradict their personal style, it can lead to dissatisfaction and feelings of inauthenticity, thereby impacting their psychological well-being. This underscores the complex interplay between societal expectations and personal identity within the LGBTQ community and highlights the need for broader acceptance and understanding of diverse beauty standards.

The intersection of race and sexual orientation presents unique challenges for Black LGBTQ women, who must navigate expectations related to both their race and sexual orientation. This study highlights that these women may face compounded biases, experiencing pressure to conform to both Eurocentric and heteronormative beauty standards. These intersecting pressures can lead to a heightened sense of marginalization and a complex negotiation of identity (Bowleg, 2013; Randle, 2015). Understanding these intersectional experiences is essential for promoting a more inclusive and comprehensive view of beauty and identity within psychological research and broader societal discourse. By addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities, future research can contribute to the development of more inclusive and supportive environments.

Limitations

The demographic makeup of the sample, particularly the predominance of white and heterosexual women, played a significant role in shaping the study's

findings. The strong preference for straight hairstyles in the heterosexual marriage scenario likely reflects the Eurocentric beauty standards that are prevalent among white participants. Previous research has shown that white individuals are more likely to adhere to these beauty norms, which prioritize long, straight hair (Opie & Phillips, 2015; Patton, 2006). This demographic bias could have skewed the results, limiting the generalizability of the findings to more racially and sexually diverse groups.

Additionally, the limited representation of Black participants (n=21) and the even smaller number of LGBTQ participants restricted the study's ability to explore how race and sexual orientation intersect to influence hairstyle preferences. The small sample sizes within these subgroups reduced the statistical power of the study, making it difficult to detect significant differences or draw robust conclusions about intersectional experiences. As a result, the observed trends should be viewed as preliminary and indicative rather than definitive.

Additionally, white participants may code LGBTQ couples as more ethnically salient in their hairstyle choices, possibly reflecting an unconscious association between non-traditional relationships and a departure from conventional beauty norms. This could be influenced by the perception that same-gender relationships challenge societal norms, thereby allowing for greater acceptance of diverse and non-conforming expressions of beauty, including natural Black hairstyles (Clarke & Turner, 2007).

The study's findings must be interpreted within the context of its limitations. The overwhelmingly white and heterosexual participant pool constrained the analysis of how race and sexual orientation interact with societal beauty standards. The small sample sizes of Black and LGBTQ participants limited the ability to draw meaningful conclusions about the intersectional experiences of these groups, reducing the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the reliance on vignettes depicting only two types of relationships (heterosexual and same-gender female) further limited the study's scope.

Another limitation is the study's relatively small sample size. While the study involved 118 participants, the diversity within this group was insufficient to detect nuanced differences in hairstyle preferences across different contexts. The small sample size also limits the statistical power of the study, reducing the likelihood of

identifying significant effects even if they exist. Additionally, the range of hairstyles presented was limited, potentially restricting participants' ability to fully express their preferences.

Future Directions

To address these limitations and build on the findings of this study, future research should strive to include a more diverse participant pool, encompassing a broader range of racial and ethnic backgrounds. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how societal norms and biases regarding hair differ across various demographic groups. Expanding the study to include diverse races and genders of partners would also help elucidate the intersectional nature of beauty standards and how this may influence hairstyle suggestions for Black women. For example, investigating whether the race of the partner (e.g., a Black woman marrying a White, Asian, or Hispanic partner) impacts hairstyle choices could reveal additional layers of bias and preference. Similarly, examining how hairstyle suggestions vary when the partner's gender is non-binary or genderqueer would provide a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of gender and sexual orientation in shaping beauty standards.

Additionally, future studies should aim to recruit a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the statistical power and allow for more robust and generalizable findings. Including a more diverse range of participants across race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation would ensure that the findings are reflective of the diverse ways in which hair impacts individuals' lives. This is particularly important for detecting subtle differences in preferences and biases related to hair and attraction. Expanding the range of hairstyles included in the study would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of participants' preferences. Including a wider variety of hair textures, lengths, and styles can capture the full spectrum of cultural and personal expressions of identity.

Future research could also benefit from a longitudinal approach to better understand the long-term effects of societal beauty standards on Black LGBTQ women. Tracking changes in self-esteem, identity, and hair practices over time would provide valuable insights into how societal pressures evolve and how individuals navigate these pressures throughout their lives. Moreover, examining the

role of media representation in perpetuating or challenging these biases could shed light on how societal norms are reinforced and how they might be disrupted to promote more inclusive beauty standards.

By addressing these areas, future research can contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the intersectional challenges faced by Black LGBTQ women. This will not only enhance the validity and reliability of findings in the field but also support efforts to promote inclusivity and authenticity in beauty standards, ultimately fostering a more equitable and diverse societal landscape.

Conclusion

This study provides important insights into the biases that shape hairstyle preferences for Black women, particularly within the context of marriage. The findings underscore the persistent influence of Eurocentric beauty standards, which prioritize straighter hair textures as the ideal for formal and special occasions. This bias is especially evident in the preferences expressed by participants when the Black woman was depicted as marrying a man, aligning with traditional heteronormative expectations (Opie & Phillips, 2015; Patton, 2006). Conversely, the greater acceptance of ethnically salient hairstyles, such as braids, in scenarios where the Black woman was marrying another woman suggests that same-gender relationships may offer more flexibility in beauty norms, though this remains a complex and nuanced issue.

The research highlights the intersectional challenges faced by Black LGBTQ women, who must navigate the compounded pressures of race, gender, and sexual orientation. The significant differences in hairstyle suggestions based on the gender of the partner reflect broader societal norms that impact Black women's experiences differently depending on their relationship context (Crenshaw, 1989). These findings emphasize the need for a more inclusive understanding of beauty that respects and celebrates the diversity of Black women's hair, particularly during formal and significant life events.

Given the study's limitations, including the predominantly white participant pool and the limited sample size, further research is necessary to fully understand the complexities of these biases. Future studies should prioritize diversity in their participant pools and explore a wider range of contexts and hairstyles to capture the

full spectrum of experiences related to hair and identity. Moreover, examining the role of media representation and adopting a longitudinal approach could provide deeper insights into how societal beauty standards evolve and impact Black women over time (Byrd & Tharps, 2001; Rosette & Dumas, 2007).

While this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the intersectionality of beauty standards, it also reveals significant gaps that must be addressed to foster a more equitable and inclusive understanding of beauty. By continuing to explore these issues, particularly as they relate to Black LGBTQ women, researchers can help challenge and ultimately redefine the societal norms that have long marginalized diverse expressions of beauty.

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