Perceptions of Natural Hair in the 21st Century
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What is beauty? This question has plagued the world for ages, and women have frequently been the victims of continually evolving ideologies of beauty, especially in America. African American women struggle to establish their beauty in an American culture that often presents black skin as inherently undesirable and ugly. The problematic reception of black beauty in American culture can be clearly seen in the struggle that black women have with their hair. Black women for hundreds of years have struggled with the concept of beautiful hair. Europeans established that straight hair is “good hair,” while the natural curl of black hair makes it ugly or “bad hair.” Throughout history black women have gone to great lengths to achieve straight hair by relaxing, pressing, and even burning their hair. This study seeks to determine whether or not the perception of natural hair as ugly and straight hair as beautiful has recently changed.